

DE GRUYTER

*Diego Chapinal-Heras*

# EXPERIENCING DODONA

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EPIROTE SANCTUARY  
FROM ARCHAIC TO HELLENISTIC TIMES

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Finally, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my family and friends. Part of this work is yours. I dedicate this book to my life companion, Vega.



# List of Abbreviations

The abbreviations follow *OCD* rules. The list below comprises other specific references.

## Archaeological journals

- Deltio*: Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον, Athens  
*Arch. Eph.*: Ἀρχαιολογική Ἐφημερίς. Περιοδικὸν τῆς ἐν Ἀθῆναις ἀρχαιολογικῆς ἐταιρείας, Athens.  
*Ell.*: Ἑλληνικά. Φιλολογικὸν Ἱστορικὸν καὶ Λαογραφικὸν Περιοδικὸν Συγγραμμά, Thessaloniki  
*Ep. Chr.*: Ἑπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά, Ioannina  
*Ergon*: Τὸ Ἔργον τῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας, Athens  
*Praktika*: Πρακτικὰ τῆς ἐν Ἀθῆναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας, Athens

## Epigraphic references

- C*: Cabanes, P. (1976), *L'Épire: De la Mort de Pyrrhos a la Conquête Romaine (272–167)*, Paris, Les Belles Letres  
*DVC*: Dakaris, S., Vokotopoulou, J. and Christidis, A.Ph. (2013), *Τα Χρηστηρια Ελάσματα της Δωδωνῆς τῶν Ἀνασκαφῶν Δ. Ευαγγελίδη*, Athens, Athines Archeologikis Eterias  
*LOD*: Lhôte, É. (2006), *Les lamelles Oraculaires de Dodone*, Genève, Droz

## Maps

The software employed for the elaboration of all the maps is ArcGIS (version 10.3 for Windows; ESRI), with license of Complutense University of Madrid. The layers for cartography with GIS technology have been obtained from the following source: Jarvis A., H.I. Reuter, A. Nelson, E. Guevara, 2008, Hole-filled seamless SRTM data V4, International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). <http://srtm.csi.cgiar.org>. For the preparation of the routes, only the slopes raster layer is used combined with Tobler equations. For a more accurate result it would be necessary to take into account other criteria, such as vegetation and rivers. The primary aspect considered in the routes is the energy required for movement. In most of the cases, the itineraries generated by ArcGIS coincide with the reconstructions proposed here. However, in the following cases some sites have been employed as a specific spot: Ammotopos, surely an important point in the southern route; and Ampelia, since there is a connection with Dodona from the Ioannina plain through a pass in the mountains. The main works consulted for the elaboration of these maps are Dausse (2007), Hammond, (1997a), Kalpakis (2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2015), Karatzeni (2011) and Pliakou (2007).



# 1 Introduction

Dodona was regarded by the ancients as the oldest of Hellenic sanctuaries renowned throughout Ancient Greece. Many works have discussed the site, especially its peculiarities, like the practice of writing oracular consultations on small lead tablets. The study of religious centers is a familiar topic for scholars of the ancient world. Comprehensive and nuanced treatments of these sites, however, remain scarce. Moreover, the general tendency to focus on a small group of sanctuaries – Delphi, Olympia and Delos – has led to the neglect of many others. In the case of Dodona, works concerning the various aspects of the locale are few and far in between. The growing interest in the shrine of recent years has not yet yielded a complete and holistic treatment of the sanctuary. The purpose of this monograph is to approach Dodona by treating not only the site and its polyfunctionality, but also the relationship between the sanctuary and its surroundings, that is, the region as a whole.

This work is centered around the concept of paths and communications, which I do not consider to be mere physical elements, the routes to and contacts with the place. Such a view is too simplistic, and ignores the complexity of the situation. When we talk about paths and communications, it means a broader concept that goes beyond the two-dimensional lines in a territory that provide information about the people and the materials crossing it, a purely functionalist view. Several years ago, Jackson coined the term *(h)odology* to refer the science or the study of ways, a term that covers not only the paths itself, but also direction and by extension, intent and manner.<sup>1</sup> However, this approach is still too narrow for the meaning this work aims to develop. Here, paths and communications are seen as elements that generate practices and meanings, as a means by which societies construct their landscape and its connections, creating a web that encompasses all aspects of their development, and captures their cultural, political, religious, economic and social facets.

This study understands “paths and communications” as the ensemble of elements that, starting with the itineraries to and from the sanctuary of Dodona, configured the interactions between the site and its surroundings. The nature of these interactions changed continuously; some aspects were maintained, others were lost. We must, therefore, not think of paths and communications as static entities, but rather the very opposite. Dynamism is the general trend in all cultures and it is especially important to remember this when dealing with a cult site. Religion and religious practices tend to present themselves as constant, timeless, and motionless, but the reality is very different.<sup>2</sup>

Before moving on to the main points of this work in detail, I would like to further elaborate on paths and communications, how they affect the way the sanctuary was

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1 Jackson, 1984, 21.

2 Graf, 2011; Chaniotis, 2011; 2013.

seen and perceived, and the manner visitors understood its religious connotations. The terminology employed in the literature on the subject tends to be complex and somewhat disorienting. The following paragraphs offer a brief definition of each concept.

Human societies have always organized around the pillars of time and space. Both concepts pose fundamental constraints on mobility, location, and accessibility to the necessities of life.<sup>3</sup> We conceive of time because we are living beings whose existence has different phases with beginning and end; we conceptualize space because we are always moving.<sup>4</sup> It is through this framework that we interpret and configure our society and its environment. There is, however, no single way of understanding time and space and the differences are just as important as the similarities.

This work also follows some of the tenets of landscape archaeology, which attempts to analyze the sites not as individual isolated elements, but takes into account the specific time and place and historical conditions.<sup>5</sup> Landscapes are meaningfully constituted physical and social environments, and meaning is inscribed on landscapes through experience.<sup>6</sup> Every landscape is different,<sup>7</sup> the result of both material and ethereal transformations, all of which are essential to understanding it completely.<sup>8</sup> We must treat landscape as a book with its own language that can be read and interpreted,<sup>9</sup> a palimpsest where historical processes are registered through time.<sup>10</sup> We can study and discern its phases due to the presence of different sources. However, it is important to note that “phases” are not like discrete units of time, or like chapters of a book, overlapping and deposited layers.<sup>11</sup> Evolution is continuous, but not linear; changes do not come about periodically, as if executed by a machine. They are always in the process of becoming and are triggered by a plethora of causes. These shifts are rarely located in the same moment in time. Thus, when we talk about phases or layers in a landscape, this does not mean that each phase presents its own discrete set of characteristics that disappear when a new one begins. In Dodona it is possible to identify periods and trends, but their development and the transitions are always gradual: tradition and innovation coexist.

Dodona as a sanctuary is a sacred landscape, a sacred space. However, this does not mean that other classifications are not valid. The theater and stadium, for example, also form part of a cultural and athletic landscape. Moreover a sacred landscape is always a political – or politicized – space. It is, in fact, a convergence of various

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<sup>3</sup> Janelle, 2017, 487–488.

<sup>4</sup> Tuan, 1979, 118–119.

<sup>5</sup> Bender, 1993, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Van Dyke, 2008, 277.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, 1993, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Lang, 2001, 211; David and Thomas, 2008, 36; Strang, 2008, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Sheldrake, 2001, 3; Devereux, 2010, 135–136.

<sup>10</sup> Reed, 1984, 4; Van Dyke, 2008, 280.

<sup>11</sup> Muir, 2004, 143.

categories, meanings and functions.<sup>12</sup> In short we cannot treat sanctuaries as merely sacred spaces.<sup>13</sup>

As a matter of fact, sanctuaries were not the only places of religion or worship in the ancient world. For the ancient Greeks, gods and goddesses lived everywhere. Any space – a spring, a mountain peak, a cave – could be associated with a deity.<sup>14</sup> A sacred landscape is a space where rites and cultural practices linked to religion are or were performed and includes the locations of myths and traditions.<sup>15</sup> The present study, however, will restrict itself to only the religious sites that are known through material evidence. In these places, the sacred space was sometimes delimited by diverse mechanisms, such as markers or walls, which separated the territory controlled by gods from that of humans.<sup>16</sup> This does not necessarily entail that other kinds of activities were forbidden there. As we will see, polyfunctionality is not the exception, but the norm. A cult site could host other sorts of events – cultural, economic, and political.

It is also essential to discuss the concept of change. Conventionally, scholars have treated religion and traditions as if they were immutable.<sup>17</sup> This notion is, of course, mistaken. No timeless, unchanged sacred landscape ever existed in ancient Greece. Each one was constructed in distinct ways in different periods and places, and was founded on very specific local knowledge.<sup>18</sup> These landscapes are configured by social interaction and recodified through practice time and time again in accordance to traditions that may seem very old, but might be more recent. To better understand the sanctuary of Dodona, this study applies a diachronic perspective and attempts to trace the changes in the physical and symbolic sanctuary through its phases, which are not always distinct.

Furthermore, we can treat landscape as a cultural product, an expression of cultural identity where ideology is always present.<sup>19</sup> As such, it can be consciously employed to display and exercise power. The repetition of traditions and practices within it allows the ruling class to reaffirm their standing in the eyes of the population in a way that is understood as perfectly normal, necessary, even common sense.<sup>20</sup> The minority that governs it is able to and often does modify the landscape to suit their

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<sup>12</sup> Lahiri, 1996, 263.

<sup>13</sup> Criado, Santos and Parceró provide similar reasoning in their work. They study the sacred dimension of a specific area in northwestern Spain through several millennia but, at the same time, explain that this landscape could have served other functions for the people that lived there (1997).

<sup>14</sup> Cole, 2004, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Horster, 2010, 437–438, although she suggests (454) that the fields owned by sanctuaries and used for farming were not necessarily religious, at least for the peasants that worked them.

<sup>16</sup> Nordquist, 2013, 172–174.

<sup>17</sup> Droogan, 2014, 124.

<sup>18</sup> Antonaccio, 1994, 102.

<sup>19</sup> McGlade, 1999, 475.

<sup>20</sup> Cosgrove, 1989, 124.



own purposes and legitimize their position. The sanctuary of Dodona is a good example of this phenomenon.

Several sources are available to scholars working on ancient sanctuaries, chief among them archaeology, literary evidence, epigraphy, and numismatics. To reconstruct a complete view of Dodona, it is critical to consult all of them. In addition, GIS technology is of great value for constructing maps and delineating the ancient paths that crossed Epirus. The theoretical framework under which these tools are employed is that of landscape archaeology, which holds that landscape is active and dynamic and that we can read it. Features of territory and culture, such as the definition and alteration of frontiers, the role of religion in these processes and our perception of the environment will be examined.

It is sometimes difficult to define the chronological limits of a case study. When dealing with an archaeological site, the tendency might be to cover the entire period of activity, from foundation to abandonment. In the case of Dodona this would encompass two millennia, that is, from Bronze Age to Late Antiquity. Such a long period would incorporate various distinct phases and the site developed and changed significantly along with the region where it is located. It is not feasible to analyze the whole life of Dodona in a study like this one. Yet focusing on one sole period is equally undesirable as it may generate a static image of the site that does not correspond to reality. Thus, this study begins with the first phase in which there are unequivocal signs of religious activity in the site and closes at one of the main turning points in the history of Dodona and at the end – it seems – of the bulk of religious activity. In short, this study will examine the development of the shrine from the beginning of Archaic Age to 167 BCE, the year Rome conquered Epirus and drastically altered the dynamics of the region. But drastic does not mean finished, since Dodona existed for many more centuries and there are unequivocal evidences of its religious role during Roman and early Bizantine times.<sup>21</sup> However, dealing with such a wide period of time would imply to take into account an amount of information that this book cannot assume. The features and processes of these later phases in the history of Greece are too complex and would require a greater expansion of the length of this book. Therefore, this comparatively brief time frame covers a sizeable period of Greek civilization, more than seven centuries, and presents quite the task for the historian. A shorter analysis, however, would omit events and processes crucial to understanding the development of both Dodona and Epirus.

Without a doubt an enormous amount of details must be considered at each phase of the sanctuary's history. Moreover, striking changes of mentality must have taken place from the Archaic to mid-Hellenistic period, specifically 167 BCE. The present work assumes these details and understands their implications. The challenge is to accurately represent these changes and to analyze them in a way that honors the site's cultural and material context and, perhaps more importantly,

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<sup>21</sup> For example, Piccinini 2013b compiles the evidence from the Augustan period.

the change processes that spurred the evolution of this religious center throughout the centuries. Although this book aims at a more or less continuous narrative, it will be necessary in some cases to go back or forwards in time to retrieve data essential to the interpretation of the period under our scope. We will, therefore, make sporadic allusions to the site during the Late Bronze Age and Roman period.

As regards the geographical context, the main area under study is Epirus, in northern Greece. I will, however, define a more specific setting given that the Epirote region does not show a homogeneous development. Accordingly, I will take the Molossian territory as our main object of study, since this kingdom controlled Dodona for centuries and played a critical role in the construction of its landscape.<sup>22</sup> As a rule of thumb other territories not so closely linked to the sanctuary are left out.<sup>23</sup> A wider perspective, however, will sometimes cover other parts of Greece and colonial territories to showcase the impact and scope of Dodona's influence in the Greek world. This measure is not unwarranted, since we cannot understand the importance of the shrine without remembering that Dodona was frequented by people from outside Epirus, and that the region later became geopolitically significant throughout the whole of the Mediterranean.

This book is divided into eight chapters. This introduction comprises the first one. Chapters two and three deal with the evolution of the sanctuary vis-à-vis the historical development of Epirus, as it is useful to trace how the sacred space of Dodona was transformed according to the political changes in the region. The point in time that divides these two chapters is the apparent formation of a major entity in Epirus, the Alliance, which demanded a different way of interaction among the communities that inhabited the territory. This phenomenon took place when Dodona had already begun to turn from an open-air shrine into a monumentalized religious center. The causes, consequences, and meanings of this complex process will be examined closely in this section. More specifically, the interpretation of some of the structures of the sanctuary will be examined and put in relation with the political and identity situation of Epirus at the time.

Chapter four focuses on the religious aspects of Dodona. First, the site itself will be surveyed and I will consider the evidence supporting or denying the existence of certain cults, as well as the theories concerning the way the oracle functioned and the rituals that took place here. Second, I will go beyond the boundaries of Epirus to see what kinds of bonds Dodona had with Boiotia, Athens, and Olympia. Although sources show them as primarily religious bonds, I will argue that they have deeper motivations.

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<sup>22</sup> As explained later, Dodona was supposed to be in the region of Thesprotia, near to the frontier with the Molossian *ethnos*. However, as the Molossians expanded, Dodona came into their territory. Moreover, the boundaries in Epirus were not fixed and sources do not provide enough information for us to have complete knowledge of this subject.

<sup>23</sup> As for instance the *Koinon* of the Prasaiatoi.

Chapter five, titled “Entangled Epirus”, deals with the region of Epirus and the paths and communications of the shrine, aiming to provide a well-defined image of the urbanization process of Epirus, and Molossia especially, which may help us better understand the development of Dodona and allow us to discern the special connections sustained between these sites and the sanctuary. I first give a tentative reconstruction of the routes that led to Dodona, based on ancient sources and modern works on the site. The point is to understand the importance of the location of the sanctuary, at the main crossroad in the Epirote hinterland. Next, I will present a brief description of the main sites –first in Molossia, then in the whole of Epirus– that had a major influence on the development of Dodona and its routes. Accordingly, other religious sites in the vicinity are considered.

Pilgrimage, the main activity related to the shrine, is the theme of chapter six. Here I present an original approach that takes into consideration the information rendered by archaeology, the literary evidence and epigraphy, especially the rich corpus of oracular consultations, which has only begun to receive the attention it deserves in recent studies. The analysis considers the different motivations of visitors to Dodona, as well as their land of origin. Finally, after examining the materiality of pilgrimage, we delve into a phenomenological approach in an effort to reconstruct how visitors felt and experienced their stay in the sanctuary and their trip to and from it.

Chapter 7 focuses on the site’s polyfunctionality. It argues that a sanctuary – understanding it in a wider sense, but focused in the case of Dodona – is not just a religious space, but also a political, economic, and socio-cultural arena. This is expressed in many ways, such as the performance of rituals, the dedication of votive offerings, or the building of specific structures. Exploring these features as part of a single continuous reality that at the same time has ample manifestation of more particular functions is useful in understanding the complexity of these places.

The structure of the concluding chapter responds to the problems concerning the activities performed in Dodona and the overall impact of the site. For this reason, I do not present the final remarks in a linear discourse, but instead divide the text into three parts, each with a particular scope. The first focuses on the sanctuary itself, its evolution and main features. The second section summarizes the role played by Dodona in the Molossian and Epirote spheres, highlighting its importance as a uniting element for the different *ethne* of the territory and the way identity mechanisms were consciously employed in the sacred area of the shrine. The section also considers the network of centers present in the area and the routes that connected them, Dodona being one of the focal points. The third and last part of the conclusion deals with the shrine in the context of the Hellenic world, considering its role not only in the mainland but also in the colonies, whose presence in the shrine is well-attested by a large number of oracular consultations.

In summary, this work aims to apply a different approach. Whereas the first parts examine the historical development, the following chapters study the evolution of the cults and the communications of Dodona not only with other settlements of Epi-

rus, but also with other regions of the Greek world. The last sections offer a further view of two of the main features of the place, the phenomenon of pilgrimage and its polyfunctionality. Despite both aspects could be examined in a separate analysis, it is essential for a better understanding of Dodona to have a more holistic perspective that takes into account not just the historical events, but also the main features and processes of the sanctuary. The goal is to avoid writing an archaeological guide, too. To focus solely on religious matters would also generate a faulty reconstruction. Dodona was not simply a sanctuary and by considering its polyfunctionality and the paths and communications that connected the site to the world that surrounded it – Molossia, Epirus, and the Greek world more broadly – we hope to offer a broad insight of Dodona as a scene for cult, political, economic, social and cultural matters. This study follows one premise: dynamism. The shrine was never static; rather it experienced continuous changes while it remained active. We can read its landscape, discern different processes, and trace its development. Some traditions appeared to have existed from the most ancient times; others abruptly disappeared. This study of the sanctuary at Dodona seeks to explain the causes and consequences.

## 2 A History of Epirus and Dodona from Archaic to Classical times

### 2.1 Finding the archaeological site

For many centuries the location of Dodona was unknown. Many travelers trekked through Greece looking for the remains of ancient cities, following the Romantic historiographic trend that aspired to recover the Classical tradition. Most references to Epirus describe it as a wild and bucolic area, a kind of “barbarian” territory.<sup>1</sup> Given the importance of Dodona in Antiquity, it was expected to be one of the largest sites in Epirus. It was not.

The first person to correctly identify the site was Donaldson, who in 1830 noticed the enormous ruins of an ancient theater that seemed to have seated 18,000 people.<sup>2</sup> Soon after Lincoln-Wordsworth suggested the same in his book *Greece: Pictorial, Descriptive and Historical*<sup>3</sup> in a brief chapter titled “Where was Dodona?” The author related a trip that took place on September 12, 1832, from Ioannina to a valley where there were some remains of a place called Dramysus. He discarded the possibility that it could be Passaron, the ancient Molossian capital, due to the small extension of the walls. But there was a building that stood out to him. It was the theatre. Lincoln-Wordsworth also discerned a structure with columns, a sort of cult construction.<sup>4</sup> He eventually proposed that this place could be Dodona. During those decades there were other attempts with less successful results.<sup>5</sup> But in 1875 the French scholar Constantin Carapanos decided to proceed with an archaeological excavation of the site, which at that time belonged to the Ottoman Empire. A summary study in two volumes was published in 1878, entitled *Dodone et ses Ruines* (Vol. 1 *Texte*, Vol. 2 *Planches*).

There were no more excavations on the site until 1920, when the Greek Archaeological Society chose G. Soteriadis to conduct a new season. There was once again a gap in excavations at Dodona until D. Evangelidis resumed activities in 1929. He was in charge of the site until 1959, the year he died. S. I. Dakaris assumed the position of director soon after and retained the position until 1997. His successors were Ch. Tzouvara-Souli, A. Vlachopoulou and K. Gravani.<sup>6</sup> Excavations were halted in 2006 due to a shortage of funds tied to the economic crisis. At the time of writing, Prof. P. Yiouni leads the restoration project of the site, mainly the theater.

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1 Dausse, 2011a, 124–126.

2 Donaldson, 1830, 46–47.

3 Lincoln, 1839, 247–253.

4 He referred to the Christian basilica, which he thought could be a Greek temple.

5 Dausse, 2011a.

6 Quantin, 2008, 11.

There is a remarkable amount of works that deal with Dodona with different approaches and purposes. They will appear throughout this study, according to the distinct aspects analyzed in each chapter. It is necessary however to present now a brief summary of the academic production concerning Dodona as an archaeological site. Long after the two-volume book of Carapanos of 1878, the first attempt to provide an updated view that included the recent findings of the last decades was Parke in 1967 in his work focused on the three main oracles of Zeus, Dodona, Olympia, and Ammon.<sup>7</sup> This was followed by Dakaris, who in 1971 published his synthesized contribution entitled *Archaeological Guide to Dodona*. Both studies became the reference works for any study related to the sanctuary, but the topic has significantly moved forward in the last two decades, with a further organization and reinterpretation of the material evidence.

Moustakis presented the first expanded analysis that considered the site of Dodona and, more specifically, its political role in the context of Epirus.<sup>8</sup> Dieterle, soon after, contributed with a major compilation that still contains the most complete catalog of the structures, votive offerings, and other elements of the place.<sup>9</sup> The absence of new archaeological data due to the cease of excavations could have entailed a decrease of the interest in the sanctuary. However, a number of different aspects have gained the attention of many researchers, as we will see. Regarding the features of Dodona as an archaeological site, the monograph of Emmerling has provided a fresh insight, with the reinterpretation of the function of some of the buildings.<sup>10</sup> More recently, in her enlightening work Piccinini has delved into the evolution of Dodona in the Archaic and Classical periods.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 The geographical background

The archaeological remains of Dodona stand in Epirus (Ἠπειρος), in northwestern Greece. It is a mountainous area,<sup>12</sup> a feature that probably affected the way its population developed into *ethne*.<sup>13</sup> We will see, however, that at least since Hellenistic

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<sup>7</sup> Parke, 1967, 1–163 and 242–286.

<sup>8</sup> Moustakis, 2006, 16–157.

<sup>9</sup> Dieterle, 2007. For this reason, movable objects mentioned in this book will be followed by the accession number of the museum collection where they are preserved and the reference of Dieterle for further bibliography.

<sup>10</sup> Emmerling, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Piccinini, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Str., 7, 7, 9.

<sup>13</sup> It is worth pointing out that this reasoning is based on the assumption that geography can condition, but not determine, the evolution of a region. It is just one element that must be considered together with others, such as economic activities, the proximity and connections to foreign *poleis*, etc. On the other hand, there are some mountainous parts of Hellas where poliadic phenomenon existed in earlier periods, as in Arcadia (Cardete del Olmo, 2016, *passim*).

times there were also *poleis* in the region. The Pindus mountain range is the main natural barrier that separates Epirus from Macedonia and Thessaly. But this is not the only one; the entire region is crossed by five ranges from southeast to northwest.<sup>14</sup> The connection with the Ionic sea, in the west, and with the Ambrakian gulf, in the south, determined their main areas of contact with the Hellenic world, although interactions with northern populations took place in earlier times.

Modern Epirus has a moderate Mediterranean climate and the average precipitation is higher than in central and southern Greece.<sup>15</sup> Temperatures also differ, as the Epirote region is usually colder, especially in winter.<sup>16</sup> In the mountainous areas this situation is more extreme. There is an abundance of vegetation in the region, such as conifer forests, grazing pastures in higher locations, and cereal fields and olive orchards in the plateaus.<sup>17</sup> The complex orography of Epirus with its many mountains and valleys leads to a rather rich hydrography. There are three main water courses in the region, the Viosa, the Arachtus and the Aspropotamos<sup>18</sup>. They are long and fast-flowing rivers that, under normal circumstance, cannot be forded.<sup>19</sup>

It generally appears that weather and climate patterns have not varied too much over the last two or three millennia.<sup>20</sup> The landscape, however, has changed in some cases for various reasons. The most remarkable changes have taken place at the mouths of the Acheron<sup>21</sup>, Achelous<sup>22</sup> and Louros rivers, as well as the peninsula of Preveza. The Acheron is particularly important for this study, since it may have been the starting point for one of the routes that led to Dodona. This river empties into the sea in the so-called Glykis Limen ("Sweet Harbor"). A recent study has shown the enormous change the harbor underwent in the last three millennia. In fact, the course of the Acheron in the lower part of the valley was modified<sup>23</sup> and,

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<sup>14</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 26.

<sup>15</sup> Tartaron, 2003, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Cabanes, 1988a, 97.

<sup>17</sup> Cabanes, 1988a, 97; Higgins and Higgins, 1996, 97.

<sup>18</sup> Hammond, 1967, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Hammond, 1997a, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Hammond, 1997a, 26. A work that deals with this aspect in the entire Greece still lacks, which entails to examine more specific cases, local ones. In the case of vegetation, there are only a few palynological studies (cf. Tartaron, 2004, 140) and commentaries by ancient authors refer just to local aspects (for instance, Livy, 38, 3, 9–11, where he talks about the surroundings of Apollonia). Epirus did not have a profound urbanistic development until almost the 19th century, and shepherding has been one of the main economic activities until quite recently. In modern times, it is known that landscape suffered an important transformation because of the demographic growth and the economic development – more fields were turned into crops because the technology was more efficient, etc. (McNeill, 1992, 292). However, in the last decades the process has been the opposite, due to the decline of farming. For this reason, wild vegetation has occupied many areas that were previously cultivated.

<sup>21</sup> Besonen, Rapp and Jing, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Piper and Panagos, 1981, 119–128.

<sup>23</sup> Besonen, Rapp and Jing, 234.

as we will see, changes in the mouth of Louros river affected the identification of some archaeological sites.<sup>24</sup>

Quite frequently, mythology contains insights that people may have of their surroundings. We can see this in the case of Arcadia,<sup>25</sup> for example, the landscape of which is constructed through several myths that capture the main features of the region. The local inhabitants and visitors to the area learned these stories and added them to their common store of knowledge. We may think that Epirus was no different, but only a few references to it remain in the extant corpus. Perhaps the most noteworthy comes from Aristotle. According to him, the great flood that took place in the times of Deucalion and Pyrrha began in the region of Dodona.<sup>26</sup> This may be connected to the greater amount of rainfall in Epirus relative to that of most of mainland Greece. The Homeric hymns may be following a similar line of reason when referring to the site as “wintry Dodona”.<sup>27</sup>

No more myths allude to this feature. But we must remember that most Epirote literature has been lost and that most references to the region are in historiographic works, such as those of Thucydides, Polybius or Titus Livius, who related only the main occurrences. We may assume that there was once rich mythologic tradition surrounding Dodona that is no longer available to us.

### 2.2.1 Molossia and the Ioannina plain

The core of Molossia is its plain and the adjacent surroundings.<sup>28</sup> Today the center is occupied by Lake Pamvotis, the largest in Epirus. Ioannina, the capital of the territory, stands on its west side. It appears that the lake did not exist in Classical and Hellenistic times, but was naturally formed some centuries later.<sup>29</sup> The plateau is surrounded by several mountains, on the slopes and peaks of which several urban centers and villages cropped up. There are many reasons for settling in more elevated places, including increased defensibility and stronger control of the area beneath. However, in this case it may also have been due to the geographical conditions of the area, as its lower regions were often covered by small lakes and marshes.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jing and Rapp, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> Arist., *Mete.* 352a.

<sup>27</sup> Hom., *Il.* 2, 750 and 16, 233–235: “περὶ Δωδώνην δυσχεῖμερον” and “Δωδώνης... δυσχεῖμερον”, respectively.

<sup>28</sup> The total area of Molossia covered around 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>, where 58 fortified settlements have been identified (Dausse, 2007, 205).

<sup>29</sup> Hammond, 1967, 185.

<sup>30</sup> Pliakou, 2007, 28 and 236.



### 2.2.2 The valley of Tcharacovitsa

Near the Ioannina plateau there is a valley, named Tcharacovitsa, 18 km away from Ioannina and 600 m above sea level<sup>31</sup>. One of the highest points in this area is Korillas (Paramythia), 1,658 m above sea level,<sup>32</sup> which has a sanctuary near the slope of mount Ptomaros (Olitsika). The valley is ca. 12 km long, from northwest to southeast, and 300 to 1,800 m wide. It can be divided into two parts. The northwest part presents an irregular orograph. It is connected to the Koruenda valley, which extends to the Thyamis (Kalamas) river. This part of the valley also surrounds the Olitsika mountain and merges into Souli and Paramythia valleys. The southeast section is more homogeneous and is delimited by the Kopani corridor. The entire valley is enclosed by a range.<sup>33</sup>

Fields for cultivating here are scarce, with the lowest part of the valley being the better suited. The current reality contrasts with some ancient accounts that refer to the region as Hellopia, a territory rich with wheat fields and pastures.<sup>34</sup> In the hills the oak is the most common tree and the animals most typically found are sheep and goats. The region has both pasture and marshy lands<sup>35</sup> and temperatures are usually colder here than in other areas of the same latitude.<sup>36</sup>

Of the main Epirote rivers, Arachtos is the one nearest to Dodona; its spring is located to the east of the Tcharacovitsa valley, from where it flows south and empties into the Ambrakian gulf. The valley of the sanctuary hosts some springs that form a river circulating in the lowest part of the gorge from northwest to southeast. Another small stream, Smolitsas, is dry in summer but turns into a watercourse during the rest of the year and serves as a tributary of the Thyamis.<sup>37</sup> The entire valley is also crossed by undercurrents. A few kilometers south from the site, in the border of the valley, we can find the spring of the Louros river – also known as Aphas or Viros. It is one of the largest in the area, flowing to meridional regions and ending in the Ambrakian gulf. In modern times there are not many streams in Tcharacovitsa valley, a different reality from that described by Pliny the Elder who claims there were “hundreds of springs gushing from its foot”.<sup>38</sup> The Acheron (Glykis) river has

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<sup>31</sup> Hatzopoulos and Mari, 2004, 505.

<sup>32</sup> Hammond, 1967, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Carapanos, 1878a, 7–8.

<sup>34</sup> Hes., *Fr.* 134 (cf. Str., 7, 7, 10) and frg. 240. We can guess that this reference alludes to a larger region, not just the valley of Tcharacovitsa. On the other hand, Eustathius does specify that this is where Dodona stands (Eust. *Il.*, 844, 16–18 [1057]).

<sup>35</sup> Precisely Apollodorus (*FGrHis* 244 F198; cf. Str., 7, 7, 10) and Proxenus (*FGrHis* 703 F7) talk about marshes surrounding the shrine, whereas Pliny the Elder, who cites Theopompus, refers to the great number of springs that crossed the slopes of Ptomaros (*HN* 4, 1, 2; cf. Theopomp., *FGrHis* 115 F319).

<sup>36</sup> Carapanos, 1878a, 8–10 and 149–150.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 2; Kirsten, 1956, 85.

<sup>38</sup> Plin., *HN* 4, 1, 2.

to be mentioned, too; its course begins south of Dodona, flows south and then turns west.

## 2.3 Some peculiarities of Epirus

### 2.3.1 Colonization

The conventional image of Epirus is that of a region separated from Greece until almost the end of the Classical Period.<sup>39</sup> According to this picture its inhabitants remained isolated for a long time and before the 5th century lived in unfortified settlements and spoke Greek but knew neither to write nor to mint coins.<sup>40</sup> Needless to say, the reality is far more complex. Epirus is big enough to show internal differences and recent data allow us to reconstruct its past more accurately.

We can discern two main regions in Epirus: coast and hinterland. Eventually, Greek influences arrived at the coast in the form of colonies. Material remains related to commerce from the end of the 9th century and onwards can be found in coastal areas. This is not surprising since the route to Magna Graecia and Sicily bordered the coast of the Balkan Peninsula until western territories were near enough to cross the sea. A predictable consequence of these colonizing ventures is the emergence of emporia and *apoikiai* along the way where boats could stop for supplies. Islands like Kerkyra and Zakynthos were also part of the itinerary.

According to the conventional thesis, after the end of Dark Age, the first Greeks to establish permanent settlements abroad came from Elis. They began with Bouchetta ca. 700 and continued with Pandosia, Elateia and Batiae.<sup>41</sup> With these centers under their possession the Eleans gained control of the lower parts of the Acheron and Louros rivers, the main commercial routes of the area. However, this theory might be incorrect, as Domínguez claims in a recent paper.<sup>42</sup> We will examine this issue at length later, when we address the connections between the cults of Zeus in Olympia and Dodona. For the moment, let it suffice to say that such Elean colonization is unlikely.

Corinthian presence is much better attested in Epirus with several *apoikiai* founded along the coast, first in Kerkyra and then the mainland. Some of these colonies would go on to become very powerful in the following centuries, especially

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<sup>39</sup> Cross, 1932, 2–3.

<sup>40</sup> Dakaris, 1973, 152.

<sup>41</sup> Karatzeni, 2011, 145. Dakaris suggested that this colonization reactivated a circulation of goods and people that was common during the Late Helladic III (14th–13th centuries). Ephyra provides valuable testimony of this former phenomenon (1971a, 134).

<sup>42</sup> Domínguez, 2015.

Apollonia,<sup>43</sup> Epidamnus, Anaktorius, Leukas and, in the second half of the 7th century, Ambrakia.<sup>44</sup>

It is almost certain that southern culture spread throughout Epirus thanks in large part to Corinthian activities. However, information concerning the relationship between natives and settlers is lacking. Some studies argue that contacts were peaceful, as the site of Ambrakia suggests, where local and imported pottery is found in equal numbers.<sup>45</sup> We may think that production was stable thanks to communal living. But this datum itself is not enough to confirm this hypothesis. On the other hand, pilgrimage routes from Ambrakia to the sanctuary at Dodona – as we will see later – would have been difficult to develop in a hostile environment. Whatever the reality may have been, contacts between the indigenous population and new settlers began in colonies founded along the coast and, as time went by, spread to further areas.

Contacts between Epirus and the islands located opposite its shores were also important. In the *Odyssey*, when the eponymous hero arrives at his homeland dressed up as a beggar, he relates that the king of Ithaca was spotted in Thesprotia, consulting the oracle of Dodona about the best way to achieve his *nostos*.<sup>46</sup> The audience knows that the hero did not consult the Epirote shrine because the Phaeacians brought him directly to the island. Odysseus once again invents a convenient story. But the reference attests to the, at the very least feasible, connection between both areas. Fortunately, we do not have to rely solely on this poem to sustain this theory. Malkin, who analyzes the fragments of some local works, among them a poem known as *Thesprotia*, thinks that the region and Ithaca might have fostered a good relationship and that the creation or re-elaboration of myths was a mechanism of remembering or reinforcing this reality.<sup>47</sup> The epic account was probably composed in Ithaca, as it focuses on Odysseus leaving his kingdom.<sup>48</sup> There is another story, however, likely conceived in Thesprotia, in which the hero married the local queen, Kallidike, and had a son with her, named Polypoites. After a war with the Brygi, supported by Ares, broke out, Odysseus was helped by Athena, and Apollo became the arbitrator of the conflict. Upon the death of Kallidike, the hero left the kingdom to his son and returned to Ithaca.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Essential for the commerce with Illyrians (Hammond, 1982, 268).

<sup>44</sup> Foss, 1978, 130; Malkin, 2001, 189. The settlement of Ambrakia already existed. Local pottery shows that there was a previous indigenous population (Andréou, 1999, 343).

<sup>45</sup> Pliakou, 1999, 45.

<sup>46</sup> Hom., *Od.* 14, 310–337 and 19, 268–299.

<sup>47</sup> Malkin, 1998, 130 ss.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 128.

<sup>49</sup> Malkin, 1998, 132; Bernabé, *PEG*, 1.

### 2.3.2 The *polis* phenomenon

The emergence of the *polis*, origin and consequence of a plethora of processes in the social, political, military, economic, and religious spheres, was a milestone in the evolution of Hellas. The city-state phenomenon, however, did not cover all regions in the same way. In Achaea, for example, there were no *poleis* until the beginning of the Classical Period,<sup>50</sup> if we consider the *polis* strictly as urban synoikismos. A political synoikismos took place among the villages of the area and, despite the absence of an *asty*, functioned as a sort of city-state with buildings and public spaces for common activities.<sup>51</sup> In Epirus, the coexistence of *poleis* and *ethne* presents an interesting case of complex social and political organization.<sup>52</sup> These conditions led to the development of political entities with some peculiarities, such as the great spatial isolation of the participating settlements, due, at least in part, to the orography, and facilitated by the practice of shepherding. This kind of territorial division contributed to different levels of ethnicity, from the local to the regional sphere, as we will see below.<sup>53</sup>

Epirus did not have *poleis* until the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic Period. For centuries most sites were small, some only inhabited seasonally. Nevertheless, we should not imagine a rural environment where connections among villages were limited, weak or nonexistent. Recent studies, such as that of Papadopoulos, demonstrate that *komai*<sup>54</sup> were actually more active than once thought and had wider operational ranges.<sup>55</sup> The 5th century brought about a transformation of the territory with the appearance and growth of settlements that were later fortified in the first half of the 4th century.<sup>56</sup> The larger ones contributed to the organization of their natural hinterland, a process that was much slower in central and south Epirus.<sup>57</sup>

In the case of the development of Dodona, we must examine Molossia, which possessed two remarkable settlements, Megalo Gardiki, usually interpreted as ancient Passaron and considered the capital of the Molossian kingdom,<sup>58</sup> and Kastritsa, which covered a territory of 30 ha. These two were far larger than Dodona, which covered 5–10 ha.<sup>59</sup> The earliest walls of the main Molossian sites are dated on the first half of the 3rd century, although some necropoleis show the reconfiguration of the

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<sup>50</sup> Morgan and Hall, 1996, 169.

<sup>51</sup> Pascual Valderrama, 2011, 545–552.

<sup>52</sup> We can see this also in Akarnania and Aetolia, for example (Cabanes, 1999, 375).

<sup>53</sup> Lasagni, 2018.

<sup>54</sup> The scholar deals with two areas of Molossia, but for this reasoning applies to the entire Epirus.

<sup>55</sup> Papadopoulos, 2016, 448.

<sup>56</sup> Andréou, 1999, 344.

<sup>57</sup> Cabanes, 1997b, 92. For a summary of the entire process, see Funke, Moustakis and Hochschulz, 2004, 338–350.

<sup>58</sup> The theory is not confirmed yet and some scholars reject it (Pliakou, 2011b).

<sup>59</sup> Hammond, 1967, 660.

territory and its inhabitants already by the end of the 5th.<sup>60</sup> Ambrakia was surely the most powerful and important site of northwestern Greece. It was located in Akarnania, near the boundary with southeastern Epirus. This position, in the Gulf of Ambrakia and near the routes that arrived from the hinterland, favoured its growth and led the Corinthian colony to become the commercial nexus between Corinth, Epirus and Akarnania. Ambrakia was also the first stop for pilgrims on their way to the sanctuary of Dodona.

In respect to the *polis* phenomenon, the coast was the first place in Epirus to host cities, already in the Classical Age. Yet, these settlements were colonies. Autochthonous enclaves did not organize themselves in this way until the end of the 4th and beginning of the 3rd centuries. The majority of large sites, however, were fortified at some point, due to continuous conflicts among the Epirote *ethne* and attacks from foreign populations, such as the Illyrians.<sup>61</sup> According to Plutarch, the Molossian king Tharyps (430?-390?<sup>62</sup>) was the one who instated Greek culture and customs and ruled the cities with human laws.<sup>63</sup> This does not necessarily mean that he introduced the *polis* system and all of its features. He may have had influence on the evolution of Epirus and, more specifically, Molossia, as the archaeological evidence shows some changes already by the end of the 5th century.<sup>64</sup>

### 2.3.3 Was the Epirote population Greek?

Frontiers are difficult to discern in Epirus. Sources do not provide us with exact information concerning territorial borders and over the years the internal boundaries of the vast Epirote territory evolved. It is easier to determine the boundaries between Epirus and other regions because of the physical characteristics of Northwest Greece: to the east lies the Pindus range; to the north the Akrokeraunian mountains; the west and south are bordered by the Ionian sea and the Ambrakian gulf, respectively.

Some ancient sources make reference to symbolic frontiers separating the Epirote population from its neighbors, not as an internal mechanism for uniting different *ethne*, but as a way of defining this area by outsiders who did not consider them Greek. As we will see, the Epirote identity was probably not fully constructed until the Hellenistic Age. That is, in the preceding centuries there was but a vague assump-

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<sup>60</sup> Domínguez, 2018, 6–10.

<sup>61</sup> Ceka (2001) provides a good outline of the phases of fortification in Epirus. In a previous work, the scholar suggests that there was some kind of architectonical koine in south Illyria and Epirus (Ceka, 1993, 133), although the Molossian area seems to have been different, with smaller settlements (Dausse, 2007, 203–204).

<sup>62</sup> For the chronological references of the rulers of the kingdom of Molossia, from Tharyps to Pyrrhus, the guide is the work of Corvisier (1999, 397).

<sup>63</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 1, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Domínguez, 2018, 6–13 and 33.

tion that they all inhabited a territory called Epirus. This notion did not necessarily correspond, however, to a sense of belonging to the same socio-cultural entity. An ethnic identity emerged with the full political development of the Molossian kingdom, which expanded – with sporadic periods of contraction<sup>65</sup> –, and probably ruled over an Epirote Alliance, which later became the Epirote *Koinon*. This happened at a time in which Epirus was already of geopolitical interest to the Hellenistic monarchies that fought secure power over the western Mediterranean.

There are, unfortunately, no extant Epirote authors to offer us insight about how the inhabitants of this territory conceived of themselves. All we have is the opinion of outsiders and there was no consensus about the region's hellenicity. The foundation of *apoikiai* in Epirus seems to support the theory that the local inhabitants were not Greeks. Plutarch and Justin might have thought the same when stating that Tharyps brought Hellenic customs and writing to his citizens.<sup>66</sup> But this evidence does not coincide with what is attested in the Homeric poems, in which places like Dodona<sup>67</sup> or the region of Thesprotia<sup>68</sup> seem to not be thought of as foreign lands. Odysseus himself was from Ithaca, a small island opposite the Epirote shore. What this lack of consensus may mean is that from the Dark Age to the Archaic Period there was a wide enough gap between the cultures and customs of Epirus and the rest of Greece for Epirotes to be seen as different. Although some authors, like Herodotus, do not treat them as foreigners.<sup>69</sup>

From the Peloponnesian War onwards the frontiers mentioned above were reappropriated by the population of Epirus, leading to the formation of a common identity and, at the same time, an emphasis on their Hellenicity. Heroic genealogies were employed in this context, as a way for the elites to legitimize and consolidate their position, and claim advantageous ties of kinship from their ancient roots. The Molossian genealogy is well known. Their kings boasted Neoptolemus, son of Achilles and Deidameia, as their ancestor.<sup>70</sup> The son of this hero was Molossus, the eponymous king of the territory.<sup>71</sup> The oldest surviving reference to this bloodline comes from Agias of Troezen,<sup>72</sup> who lived in the 8th century.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, it was only when the kingdom of Molossia began its expansion that this discourse became so promi-

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<sup>65</sup> For example, when Philip II acquired the Molossian regions of Orestis, Paravaea, Timphaea and Atintania, they also conceded to Alexander I the control of the settlements of Pandosia, Boucheta, Elatea, and Cassope (Domínguez, 2014, 208–209).

<sup>66</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 1, 4; Iust., *Ep.* 17, 3, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Hom., *Il.* 2, 748–752 and 16, 233–235; *Od.* 19, 268–299.

<sup>68</sup> Hom., *Od.* 14, 310–337 and 19, 268–299.

<sup>69</sup> Hdt., 2, 52, 2 (Dodona as the oldest Greek oracle); 6, 127 (Alcon, from Molossia, was one of the Greek suitor for Agariste, daughter of Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon).

<sup>70</sup> Apollod., *Epit.* 6, 13. In some versions he is called Pyrrhus.

<sup>71</sup> Paus., 1, 11, 2; Serv., *Aen.* 3, 297.

<sup>72</sup> *PEG* I, 95.

<sup>73</sup> Schmitz, 2007, 71.

nent.<sup>74</sup> The lack of consensus among ancient authors on the Hellenicity of Epirus, as well as the paucity of early epigraphic material in the region, means that the debate on Epirote ethnicity is still open.<sup>75</sup>

### 2.3.4 The Epirote *ethne*

It is certainly difficult to identify who the inhabitants of Epirus were. Epirotes were divided into many *ethne* that were constantly evolving. But before treating this question, I will clarify what I mean by *ethne*. The Greek term τὸ ἔθνος has no single translation or description. Ancient sources provide different definitions for the word *ethnos*. Its meaning was rather fluid and varied.<sup>76</sup> It could apply not only to human societies, but also to a swarm of bees,<sup>77</sup> mythological collectives such as Erinyes<sup>78</sup> or a group of warriors.<sup>79</sup> In short, any group sharing certain characteristics could be called an *ethnos*.<sup>80</sup>

It appears that Antiquity had no fixed idea for the term and, in the political realm, even *ethnos* and *polis* were sometimes confused.<sup>81</sup> We can perhaps better understand the term *ethnos* by comparing it to the more familiar *polis*. The *polis*, to be sure, was one of the most important organizing elements of Greek civilization, but there were many areas in Hellas where population was organized into *ethne*. *Ethne* and *poleis* coexisted because they were not in opposition.<sup>82</sup> This was the case in Epirus, Achaea, Arcadia and Boiotia.<sup>83</sup>

In this book, the term *ethnos* will refer exclusively to the formation of a common identity by different inhabitants of a region. An *ethnos* can also describe a smaller population, whether it encompass a few centers or even a single site and its inhabitants. This feeling of collective identity would be determined by an array of shared features, mainly cultural,<sup>84</sup> among which an essential feature is the belief in one or more common ancestors. It is not possible to enumerate all of the discrete elements that must be present in the formation of an *ethnos*. Each case is a little different as the sources show.

One of the main features of Epirus that might have influenced the division of the inhabitants into *ethne* is the orography. The territory is intersected by mountains and

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<sup>74</sup> Chapinal-Heras, 2014, 177.

<sup>75</sup> Malkin, 2001.

<sup>76</sup> Fraser, 2009, 1–4.

<sup>77</sup> Hom., *Il.* 2, 87.

<sup>78</sup> Aesch., *Eum.* 365; Sof., *Filoc.* 1147.

<sup>79</sup> Hom., *Il.* 2, 91.

<sup>80</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2004, 93.

<sup>81</sup> Morgan, 2003, *passim*, 7–9.

<sup>82</sup> Walbank, 1985, 22. Cf. Brock and Hodkinson (2000) for different cases in the Greek world.

<sup>83</sup> Morgan, 2003, 6.

<sup>84</sup> Hall, 2002, 194.

communication between communities must have been difficult. Thus, it comes as no surprise that some areas were separated from one another so as to develop their own identity.<sup>85</sup> Hammond adds that in Epirus, as in Upper Macedonia, the basic bond of *ethnos*, defined by him as “a tribal state”, would be kinship.<sup>86</sup> As stated above, at the end of the Classical and the beginning of the Hellenistic period some centers in Epirus became *poleis*. Although isolated due to geographical conditions, they were connected through shepherding paths and commerce routes, among others.

Before continuing with this discussion, it is essential to define two more concepts: ethnicity and identity. Both of them are very complex terms and there is still much debate concerning their definition. Yet it is crucial to apprehend their meaning, or, at the very least, to specify the way this monograph understands them. At the same time, it is possible to see that ethnic identities often evolved from a local sphere – or a smaller territory – to cover a larger space, eventually incorporating all of Epirus.

Ethnicity refers to the sense of belonging to the same group felt by individuals in a certain territory. A prevailing element of ethnicity is kinship, which can be real or fictitious. The elaboration of genealogies with a common ancestor, a mythical forebear through whom the *ethnos* began to exist is not unusual.<sup>87</sup> This means that ethnicity has both a spatial and temporal frame, as well as a third dimension: a common history, articulated through myths and other mechanisms.<sup>88</sup> This last one emerges from the symbiosis of territory and kinship. Another feature usually present in ethnicity is the opposition between “us” and “them”, in which stereotypes are used to describe those who do not belong to the community.<sup>89</sup> It is worth pointing out that ethnicity does not exist by itself, rather it is actively constructed.<sup>90</sup> Accordingly, politics must be taken into account when dealing with ethnicity.<sup>91</sup> There is ongoing debate concerning the validity of archaeological materials in determining ethnicity. Some scholars, like Hall, maintain that written evidence is the only means by which we can accurately accomplish this aim.<sup>92</sup> It is the opinion of the author that we

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<sup>85</sup> Cabanes, 1990, 73.

<sup>86</sup> Hammond, 2000, 345. This author rejects the theory of Hatzopoulos (1996), who states that there were “rural communities”. However, Hammond highlights that both Epirote and Upper-Macedonian populations were mainly shepherds for many centuries. Due to their nomadic way of life it is likely that they were tribal communities in the beginning. When later sources – at end of the Classical period – describe them as more complex structures, we are talking about tribal states (Hammond, 2000, 352).

<sup>87</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2005, 92.

<sup>88</sup> Antonaccio, 2010, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Lucy, 2005, 100 – 101.

<sup>90</sup> MacSweeney, 2009, 102; Antonaccio, 2010, 5. This trend is known as “instrumentalism”, opposed to “primordialism”, that considers that ethnic feelings are a feature that concerns all humans, whatever it is their culture (Cardete del Olmo, 2005, 94).

<sup>91</sup> Morgan, 2009, 12.

<sup>92</sup> Hall, 1997.



can approach ethnicity through both archaeological and literary evidence.<sup>93</sup> Besides, ethnicity is not static. On the contrary, we can see its dynamism when we realize that the vindication of belonging to an ethnic group happens only in specific moments, when it is necessary. Most of the time the importance of the ethnic designation is seen as secondary.<sup>94</sup>

In Epirus, as in other areas, some ancient *ethne* no longer appear in the sources and other new ones are attested in later times, showing a certain evolution. However, ethnicity, despite being flexible, is not without form, as some elements – customs, names, etc. – do remain. Yet just as some elements are fixed, others are created, creating a new “tradition”.<sup>95</sup>

It is also possible to understand ethnicity as ethnic identity, one of the aspects that tends to play an important role in the concept of identity. Just as with ethnicity, ethnic identity is built on kinship and territoriality.<sup>96</sup> But the notion of identity is much broader; it covers other spheres, such as cultural identity, which takes into account other divisions like gender, social status, and age.<sup>97</sup> Identity is always produced through social interaction and it is precisely for this reason that we can see its presence in material culture.<sup>98</sup> It is a mental construction, a multiform and malleable reality.<sup>99</sup> This means that ethnicity operates on several levels, depending on individual identity. Thus, there is not a single unique ethnicity within a group; rather each member is situated in one or more of the levels that interact among themselves in response to the various elements that condition them.<sup>100</sup> Some scholars emphasize that the emergence of a *koinon*, or federal state, is linked to the development of a common identity within a territory.<sup>101</sup> This point of view, however, might be too reductionist because not all ethnicity criteria are always present in the formation of a federal entity.<sup>102</sup>

On the topic of geography, it is important to note that Epirote boundaries cannot be reconstructed with certainty before the 5th century, as ancient sources do not provide this type of information. The region is first mentioned by Hecataeus of Miletus: τῆς Ἠπείρου (550–476)<sup>103</sup>. The main ethnic division of Epirus distinguishes three areas: Thesprotia, Molossia, and Chaonia. The former extended from Ambrakia to

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<sup>93</sup> Antonaccio, 2009, 34. For the use of archaeology for the study of ethnicity in ancient cultures and the evolution of this debate, see Lucy (2005), as well as Fernández-Götz and Ruiz Zapatero (2011, esp. 227–228), who examine which element should be taken into account for this purpose.

<sup>94</sup> Konstan, 2001, 30–33; McInerney, 2001, 59; Hall, 2015, 39.

<sup>95</sup> Lucy, 2005, 96.

<sup>96</sup> Antonaccio, 2009, 32–33.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> Antonaccio, 2009, 46.

<sup>99</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 130–134.

<sup>100</sup> Fernández Götz and Ruiz Zapatero, 2011, 226.

<sup>101</sup> Prontera, 2003, 108.

<sup>102</sup> Hall, 2015, 30–31 and 48.

<sup>103</sup> Hecat., *FGrHis* 1 F26.

the Thyamis river on the coast, and up to Dodona in the hinterland. Chaonia was situated between this river and the Illyrian frontier, in the Akrokeraunian range. The Molossians, on the other hand, occupied a vast part of the hinterland, where the most fertile fields lay.<sup>104</sup> But there were more than just three *ethne*. Theopompus talks about fourteen, although mentions only two by name, the Chaonians and Molossians.<sup>105</sup> Thanks to other ancient authors and epigraphic sources we can compile a much longer list, yet we must remain aware that some of them correspond to specific periods in time and others describe *ethne* at the frontiers with other regions – Macedonia, for example – and may have belonged to either territory, depending on the political context. To name a few, Strabo refers to Cassopaeans, Athamanians, Aethiceans, Tymphaeans, Orestians, and Paravaeans;<sup>106</sup> moreover, in an inscription dated to the end of the 3rd century BCE we also find the Kuestians and, inside this *ethnos*, the Aterargians.<sup>107</sup> A key takeaway is that sub-divisions are present within the *ethne* themselves describing groups the size of a few villages, to that of an entire region. It is possible for us to discern at least three levels: the local, regional and superregional.<sup>108</sup> This division feature is still today confusing.<sup>109</sup> The additional problem of our ignorance of their frontiers is of equal if not greater importance. Although we can assume that the Epirotes knew to which *ethne* belonged, we have only a few literary and epigraphic references to them, and they are not enough to accurately define their boundaries. We will concern ourselves with the Thesprotians, Molossians, and Chaonians, the three main *ethne* and by far the best attested.

According to the most common account transmitted by our sources, Epirus was first ruled by the Chaonians, and only later did the Molossian *ethnos* become the hegemonic power of the region.<sup>110</sup> Dodona is believed to have been originally in the domain of the Thesprotians.<sup>111</sup> Euripides seems to be aware of this when in his *Phoenician Women* Creon encourages his son Menoeceus to go to the holy lands of Dodona in Thesprotia.<sup>112</sup> However, the 4th century Athenian orator Hyperides thought differ-

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**104** Larsen, 1968, 274.

**105** Theopomp., *FGrHis* 115 F 382.

**106** Str., 7, 7, 5–8.

**107** C35.

**108** In a similar way, Hansen (2004, 60) distinguishes the categories of “regional-ethnic” and “city-ethnic”. A good example to illustrate this is the epigraph *SGDI* 1346: Σαβυρ[τίου] / [Μολο]σσῶν Ὀνοπέρνου [Κα-]/[πρά]του; Lhôte makes the following classification: “un ethnique (Molosse), un phylétique (Onopernian) et un clanique (Kartatan)” (2011, 105). In some cases, the term attested concerns a precise settlement, which we call a “civic ethnic” (Cardete del Olmo, 2005, 61).

**109** See more in Funke, Moustakis and Hochschulz, 2004, 339.

**110** Str., 7, 7, 5. Pascual finds it plausible that the Chaonians were the most powerful *ethnos* in Epirus in the 5th century, based mainly on Thucydides (2, 80, 5).

**111** In fact, the name of this region might mean literally “attributed to god”, that is to say, to the oracle (Simone, 1993, 53).

**112** Eur. *Phoen.* 982.

ently: “the country of Molossia, in which the temple [of Dodona] stands...”<sup>113</sup> The difference is probably the result of the political expansion of the Molossian *ethnos*, which took the shrine under its sphere of influence.<sup>114</sup> This took place during the 4th century or, perhaps more likely, at the end of the 5th. As I will explain later, the site was transformed from an open-air sanctuary into a more “monumentalized” religious center. The oldest buildings at Dodona point to this period and can be linked to a change in the management of the site by its new rulers.

### 2.3.5 Federal states in ancient Greece

When dealing with federalism in Antiquity, we should not expect to find political entities with clearly defined features. In the majority of cases, comparisons result in fewer similarities and more differences and exceptions. The terminology can also be confusing, since there is little pertinent information in the ancient sources. First of all, it is worth pointing out that federalism does not merely entail the transition from *ethnos* to federal state. That is, the term does not simply describe the political articulation of the tribal state.<sup>115</sup> The reality is far more complex; federalism has various degrees of development and each case presents its own evolution and particularities.<sup>116</sup> While the usual starting point, at least in Epirus, is the *ethnos*,<sup>117</sup> we must also take the *polis*, conventionally considered to be an incompatible political structure, into account. In fact, recent work has pointed out that both phenomena, federal state and *polis*, coexisted, to the extent that almost half the city-states belonged to some kind of confederation in Classical times.<sup>118</sup>

This book will frequently employ the term *koinon*, which differs from the similar and often confused terms *symmachia*, *sympoliteia*, league, and confederation. Larsen, who attempted to establish a comprehensive system of classification 40 years ago, argues that the term “confederation” should apply to the most complex and developed federal entities, whereas “league” refers to more simple or dispersed political organizations. Inside leagues, we find *symmachiae*, permanent alliances where cooperation in war served as the main tie, often with one of its members in a preeminent role, as was the case with the Peloponnesian and Delian leagues. *Sympoliteiae* had a common political system,<sup>119</sup> in which all participants shared the identical citizenship.<sup>120</sup>

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113 Hyp., 4, 25, trad. Torres Ruíz.

114 Scholars have proposed different dates to this occurrence: Cross, 1932, 6–7 (Persian Wars, but his arguments are not strong); Dakaris, 1973, 155 (4th cent); Corvisier, 1991, 202–203 (Hellenistic Age).

115 McInerney, 2013, 466.

116 Beck and Funke, 2015, 12.

117 Beck, 2003, 179–181.

118 Beck and Funke, 2015, 3.

119 Buraselis, 2003, 41.

In the intervening years some scholars have questioned these definitions, arguing that this classification often does not coincide with reality. For example, in the last two decades archaeological findings have shown that *symmachiae* could have broader implications. In a 6th century bronze plaque from Olympia we read that the Elean *symmachia* was not limited to matters of war but also had clout in the political and religious spheres.<sup>121</sup> The terms “confederation” and “league”, on the other hand, are employed interchangeably. As Larsen states, the sources do not have a set terminology for talking about federalism, but employ terms randomly. In this sense, the word “*koinon*” envelopes all of those possibilities. In theory, the term *koinon* refers to any type of association, union or community, which entails certain difficulties when trying to identify features of federal organization.<sup>122</sup> When the term *koinon* describes a federal state, Larsen understands the expression as meaning commonwealth, the members of which are supposed to have the same rights. But sometimes both *koinon* and *ethnos* are used with similar intended meanings, making things even more confusing. The two terms, however, are rather distinct. *Koinon* is linked to the political sphere, while *ethnos* is communal in scope.<sup>123</sup>

In a recent paper, McInerney compiles data from various *koina* and draws a list of commonly shared elements, including ethnic affiliation,<sup>124</sup> connections with Homeric poems, a common religious center, a meeting place and assembly – sometimes coinciding with the sanctuary –, the presence of federal magistrates and *strategoi*, a federal army, judicial apparatus and coinage.<sup>125</sup> Of course, every single case of study has its own characteristics, but the list provides an excellent starting point for examining this complex topic.

A problem arises when evidence points to a federal entity, but there is no reference made to a *koinon* in that period. We could perhaps posit a lacuna in the epigraphic evidence or argue that the community used a different term to describe its political organization. These problems are not uncommon in Epirus, where an additional difficulty is present. During the 4th and 3rd centuries the federal government of Molossia was based on kingship. Thus, in addition to the common terms *koinon* and *symmachia*, “*basileia*” is also used to describe the political organization of this period.

In brief, we do not possess a unique, tailored nomenclature for talking about federalism in ancient Greece. However, even if no term applies perfectly to all the cases, it is both necessary and useful to employ the available terminology. The exact mean-

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<sup>120</sup> Larsen, 1968, xiv-xvii. For the difference between *sympoliteia* or *isopoliteia*, another less common term, see Rzepka, 2002, 241–243.

<sup>121</sup> Cabanes, 2004, 38–39; Ebert and Siewert, 1999, 402–404.

<sup>122</sup> Rzepka, 2002, 226.

<sup>123</sup> Larsen, 1968, xiv-xv.

<sup>124</sup> Although it is often seen as one of the main arguments, there are some cases when a common genealogy is not so strict, as if it was not so important for belonging to that *koinon* (Mackil, 2014, 281).

<sup>125</sup> McInerney, 2013, 470–471.

ing of each term might differ depending on the researcher using it, but, as is the case with any nomenclature, consistency is key. This book will use the word *koinon* to describe federal organization in Epirus from the earliest periods, for which we can postulate its existence, even if the term itself does not appear until.<sup>126</sup> Confederation is understood here as a synonym. For the previous stage of political development in Molossia, only *basileia* accurately describes the situation. But this term covers also a larger span of time, from the time of the first king until the last monarch died leaving no heirs. Kingship in Epirus, therefore, coexisted with the *koinon* and, for some time, even with the *symmachia*.

## 2.4 From Dark Age to the Archaic period – Was Epirus isolated?

The isolation of Epirus during these centuries is reflected by the scarcity of information in our sources. However, archaeologists are continuously recovering more evidence for more contacts than expected, as, for example, in Mavromandilia, near Dodona, where pottery in different regional Greek styles has appeared,<sup>127</sup> or in Liatovouni, also in the hinterland, with its graves containing objects from Macedonia and Italy, among other places.<sup>128</sup> In light of this evidence, we must reevaluate our isolation theory. Although it is unlikely that Epirus was completely integrated into the Greek world even in the Archaic period, we can at the very least confirm contacts with foreign lands. While colonization must have motivated many of these connections with lands abroad, another element, the sanctuary of Dodona, surely played an active role in the process. In her recent monograph, Piccinini deals with these two factors in the Archaic period and not only demonstrates the influence of Corinth and its *apoikiai*, but also argues for the probability of an earlier influence from Euboea, who may have stopped at Epirus on their way to the Central and Western Mediterranean. This may have affected the way the indigenous communities of Epirus and the islands facing the coast interacted with their southern neighbors. More specifically, there were important consequences for the main sanctuary of the territory, situated in Dodona.<sup>129</sup>

### 2.4.1 Dodona, a lighthouse in the hinterland at the end of Dark Age

The archaeological record for this period contains enough evidence to confirm the religious function of the site. Current debate is centered on determining whether religious activity at Dodona started in the Late Bronze Age or was a later development

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<sup>126</sup> Epigraphy is the primary source for this.

<sup>127</sup> Tzortzatou and Fatsiou, 2009.

<sup>128</sup> Papadopoulos, 2016, 447–448.

<sup>129</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 45–72.

in Archaic times.<sup>130</sup> There is no question that the site had an established religious function in later times, as evidenced by plenty of votive offerings and a few literary references.

Bronze cauldrons<sup>131</sup> and tripods<sup>132</sup> are typical objects from the end of the 8th century to the first half of the 7th found on the site.<sup>133</sup> Their function is not clear. As it will be explained later, they could either be votives or might have been part of the oracular consultation. In other regions they were employed as offerings in agonistic events and animal sacrifices.<sup>134</sup> In fact, it is becoming more popular the thesis that stresses their function as social markers of prestige and as elements connected to meeting points for the elites. Not surprisingly, the objects recovered in Dodona are similar to the ones found in Delphi and Olympia, where we can see the earliest examples of tripods, dating to the end of the 11th or beginning of the 10th centuries.<sup>135</sup>

There are also 8th century bronze figurines, both anthropo- and zoomorphic. Some of these portray warriors about throwing an object (probably a spear) with their right hand and holding another object in their left, perhaps a shield.<sup>136</sup> Some scholars have argued that they represent Zeus due to some similarities with figurines found in Olympia and called “Warrior Zeus”. This is one of the first elements that links Dodona with the cult of Zeus at this time – at least according to the material remains –, whose worship in the Elean sanctuary was already established.<sup>137</sup> However, the identification of these sculptures with Zeus is far from certain. As Langdon argues, they seem to be imported from the Near East, from the “smiting gods” style of the Syrio-Palestines.<sup>138</sup> They thus may testify that the cult belonged to a war-like deity. On the other hand, this does not necessarily imply that the meaning of the

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**130** This study does not cover this period. For this, see Dakaris, 1971a (supports), Tartaron, 2004 (rejects).

**131** MN At. No. 431: Dieterle, 2007, F220. MN At. No. 329: Dieterle, 2007, F221. MA Io. No. 749: Dieterle, 2007, F222. MA Io. No. 1551: Dieterle, 2007, F223. MA Io. No. 2688: Dieterle, 2007, F224. MA Io. No. 162: Dieterle, 2007, F225.

**132** MN At. No. 419: Dieterle, 2007, F385. MA Io. No. 74: Dieterle, 2007, F390. MA Io. No. 123–127: Dieterle, 2007, F391; Piccinini, 2012, 103. MN At. No. 16857: Dieterle, 2007, F392. MA Io. No. 645: Dieterle, 2007, F393. MA Io. No. 911: Dieterle, 2007, F394. MA Io. No. 1284: Dieterle, 2007, F395. MA Io. No. 1415: Dieterle, 2007, F396. MA Io. No. 2520: Dieterle, 2007, F397. MA Io. No. 2939 and 2984: Dieterle, 2007, F398. MA Io. No. 3051: Dieterle, 2007, F399. Par.Lo. MNC 2877: Dieterle, 2007, F400. Par.Lo. MNC 1237: Dieterle, 2007, F401. MA Io. No. 1689: Dieterle, 2007, F402. All these cauldrons and tripods listed above are dated on the 8th–7 h centuries.

**133** Piccinini, 2012, 103–104.

**134** Langdon, 1997, 117; Himmelmann, 2001, 165.

**135** Kiderlen, 2010, 92–98. In Boiotian sanctuaries the oldest ones are from the 7th century (Papalexandrou, 2008, 252). In the Ionian area there are only four fragments from the Heraion of Samos (Simon, 1997, 130, n. 21).

**136** MA Io. No. 4905 (first half of the 7th cen., found southwest from building A): Dieterle, 2007, 180–182, F51. Lost (found in building E1): Dieterle, 2007, 181–182, Fig. 52.

**137** Dieterle, 2007, 181.

**138** Langdon, 1999, 24–25.

figurines is similar. Below we will see that literature can help to delve into this aspect.

In any case, the figurines may be interpreted as evidence of contact between Olympia and the Epirote sanctuary. It is equally likely, however, that their similarities are mere coincidence, since they appear to be a common offering. For example, a few figurines with similar features have been found in Delphi. Despite their description by Coldstream as “horse-tamers”,<sup>139</sup> their posture is reminiscent of the Dodonan statuettes. It is possible that this kind of votive was not linked to a specific divinity, but rather stressed a martial context, or emphasized the warlike nature of the god to whom they were deposited. It is equally possible that the anthropomorphic figurines may represent the worshippers, not the god being worshipped.<sup>140</sup> Two more figurines may also represent Zeus.<sup>141</sup>

As far as zoomorphic pieces are concerned, it is the bronze horses,<sup>142</sup> a lion devouring its prey,<sup>143</sup> and a griffin that stand out most.<sup>144</sup> More quotidian objects like pearls<sup>145</sup> and needles have also been found,<sup>146</sup> as well as iron and bronze weapons, such as a double axe<sup>147</sup>, spearpoints,<sup>148</sup> arrowpoints,<sup>149</sup> helmets,<sup>150</sup> and at least two shields.<sup>151</sup> A bronze plate, of circular shape and decorated with palmettes,<sup>152</sup> and two protomes in the shape of women complete the main list.<sup>153</sup> Regarding these protomes, Langdon suggests they may show how society was structured at the time. In her analysis of the five Geometric bronze statuettes that functioned as handles for tripods, which approaches the figures as part of a group, she sustains that each fig-

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**139** Coldstream, 2003, 177, Fig. 58e-f.

**140** *Ibidem*, 332.

**141** MA At. No. 34 (second half of the 8th cent./Late Geometric): Dieterle, 2007, 180, F53. MA Io. 2541 (second half of the 8th cent./Late Geometric): Dieterle, 2007, 180, F54.

**142** MA Io. No. 823 (750–700): Dieterle, 2007, 171 and 367, F100. Hammond (1967, 429) counts at least four of this period.

**143** MA Berl. No. 30823 (7th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F99.

**144** MA Io. No. 7494 (660–650): Dieterle, 2007, 171–172 and 368, F159.

**145** MA Io. No. 4923 (7th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 381, F640.

**146** MA Ber. No. 10686 (7th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 382, F673. MA Ber. No. 10687 (7th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 382, F672.

**147** MN At., No. 878: Dieterle, 2007, 243, F541.

**148** MN At., No. 874: Dieterle, 2007, F541 and F542.

**149** Two of them are dated on the 7th cent. MA Io. No. 2914: Dieterle, 2007, 378, F523. MA Io. No. 3194: Dieterle, 2007, 378, F524. Another three are uncertain, MA Io. No. 1715: Dieterle, 2007, 378, F522. MA Io. No. 3198: Dieterle, 2007, 378, F525. MA Io. No. 1716: Dieterle, 2007, 378, F522. MA At. No. 143: Dieterle, 2007, 378, F521.

**150** Lon.BM 1954.10–18–1 (ca. 600 or 650–570): Piccinini, 2012, 145.

**151** The first one decorated with a sphinx, MA Io. No. 3043 (second half of the 7th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 224 and 375, F426. The second with a Geometric style horse, MA Io. No. 1735 (7 h cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 225 and 375, F424.

**152** MA At. No. 806 (7 h cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 222 and 371, F268.

**153** MA At. No. 341 (beginnings of the 7th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 220–221 and 370, F226. MA At. No. 372 (625–600): Dieterle, 2007, 220–221 and 370, F227.



urine would have had its analogous male in the vessel. That is to say, they would be in pairs. This feature may have different interpretations, ranging from representations of mythical episodes to aristocratic depictions of the stabilization of Greek society.<sup>154</sup> According to the excavations reports from Dodona, both female figurines were part of bronze vases, and did not specifically adorn tripods. However, there are some correspondences that allow us to think that they might have the same purpose. In fact, the following centuries feature more protomes in this style, which attests to the perennial durability of this artistic feature in which figures of both sexes were depicted together.

It is difficult to expatiate on the identities of the individuals who deposited these votives. Was the activity open to anyone? Even if we assume that it was, few could afford to dedicate a bronze statuette. We should also question whether these were individual or collective offerings. Taking into account the cost of production, one may think that in most of the cases the dedicators were aristocrats, local elites,<sup>155</sup> who made the most of this cult space by competing amongst themselves, and used this venue to assert their position. This does not mean that people of more humble circumstances did not visit the sanctuary. It is likely that they deposited more modest and perishable offerings now lost. In fact, the dearth of pottery is also noteworthy. One might think that some individuals, especially those of fewer means, would have made offerings made of this material. Does the lack of pottery at the site mean that pilgrims to Dodona were solely of high-status? Surely not. As we will see, the epigraphic evidence rejects this theory, at least for the following centuries. It is possible that these materials were pushed aside and destroyed periodically, as more sumptuous objects were preferred. In other words, the sacred space was consciously constructed around the elements that were most important to those who controlled the place. It is also important to mention that some of the oldest offerings – from the late 8th and early 7th centuries – are Corinthian-made, the first non-Epirote objects in Dodona in this phase. It is impossible to discern whether they denote the presence of Corinthian or colonial aristocrats at the site, or if they were simply purchased and dedicated by local elites.<sup>156</sup> In any case, they provide clear evidence for the early expansion of the network of Dodona.

This phase also shows evidence of at least one building, found during the excavation of the later stoa of the *bouleuterion*, below the Hellenistic pavement. The remains show an ellipsoidal structure, 9.5 m long. A few pottery shards discovered inside the structure date to the Protogeometric. While this type of edifice generally serves a religious function, it may also have functioned as a venue for hosting people.<sup>157</sup> In fact, we must not discard the possibility of an elite residence, such as the “ruler’s dwellings”, wide-spread throughout Greece and carefully analyzed by Mazar-

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<sup>154</sup> Langdon, 1998, 169–170.

<sup>155</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 44. For the specific scope of tripods in this topic, see Kiderlen, 2010, 92–102.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*, 63–65.

<sup>157</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 101–102.



akis-Ainian.<sup>158</sup> All in all, the buildings likely had a religious function, which fits well with the general picture of Dodona.

#### 2.4.2 The antiquity of Dodona in literature

Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have elements that harken to a very early date;<sup>159</sup> spotting and interpreting these references, however, must be carried out with great caution. The homeric Dodona is one of the main oracles of the Achaeans and lies in the vicinity of Odysseus' Ithaca. The shrine is mentioned four times in the homeric poems<sup>160</sup>. It first appears in Achilles' prayer to Dodonian Zeus, who is given the epithet Pelasgian, a term with the connotation of antiquity.<sup>161</sup> The epithet is doubtlessly meant to conjure the revered patina of antiquity, but it may also point to a historical substrate.

Herodotus, who comes much after Homer, provides worthy testimony for Dodona's antiquity, when he refers to the shrine as the oldest sanctuary in the Hellenic world<sup>162</sup> and narrates stories concerning its origin.<sup>163</sup> According to the first account, told to him by the priests of Theban Zeus, a group of Phoenicians kidnapped two women consecrated to Zeus in the Egyptian Thebes. One of them was sold in Libya and founded the sanctuary of Ammon in Siwah; the other ended up in Greece, where she founded Dodona. The priestesses of the shrine, however, related a different story: two doves left Thebes; one went to Libya and the other to Epirus. The latter, perched on a tree and using a human voice, gave the order for the institution of an oracle of Zeus. Herodotus tries to explain both episodes rationally by stating that the kidnapping was probably true and one of the two women, after being sold as a slave, founded a shrine to Zeus in Thesprotia.<sup>164</sup> The fictitious account attempts to give greater importance to Dodona by linking it to Siwah, and at the same time shows us that the sanctuary's purview went far beyond the frontiers of Epirus.

Religious activity on the site in the final stages of the Dark Age and the beginning of the Archaic period is undeniable. But some questions still remain, especially as concerns the nature of the sanctuary at Dodona. Most of the dedications seem to be local; even the oracular consultation of Odysseus can be understood as being performed by a local, since his island, Ithaca, faced the mainland of Epirus.<sup>165</sup> In con-

<sup>158</sup> Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997.

<sup>159</sup> Fowler, 2004; Lateiner, 2004, 22.

<sup>160</sup> Hom., *Il.* 2, 748–752 and 16, 233–235; *Od.* 14, 310–337 and 19, 268–299 (these two refer to the same scene, with the hero explaining that he is supposed to be consulting the oracle).

<sup>161</sup> Hom., *Il.* 16.233–235. Kittelä, 2013, 35, n. 47.

<sup>162</sup> Hdt., 2, 52, 2.

<sup>163</sup> Hdt., 2, 54–55.

<sup>164</sup> Hdt., 2, 56, 1–2.

<sup>165</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 116.

trast, Herodotus describes a sanctuary known by the entire Greek world. If Herodotus is right, it is not inconceivable that pilgrims bought offerings of Epirote manufacture either on the way to the Dodona or at the sanctuary itself.

Shepherding may have played a crucial role in the origin and development of Dodona, given its close link to commerce between the coast and the hinterland. The site of Vitsa, located near the modern village of Monodendri, around 40 km north to Dodona, is likely to have been one of the main shepherding settlements in the vicinity. Archaeologists have found 178 graves dating from the 9th to the 4th centuries BCE at the site.<sup>166</sup> The funerary goods accompanying the human remains include weapons, such as swords, knives and spearpoints,<sup>167</sup> in the case of male graves, and ornamental objects in the case of female burials.<sup>168</sup> At least one building dates to the Geometric period, but only one wall of it remains,<sup>169</sup> since it was replaced by an oval structure in Classical times. This structure, known as House Z, probably functioned as the residence of the local ruler.<sup>170</sup> There are also traces of huts from as early as the second half of the 9th century.<sup>171</sup> Some remarkable objects found at the site include a bronze horse figurine of the 8th century<sup>172</sup> and a few bronze oenoches with female protomes as handles, similar to those found at Dodona.<sup>173</sup> Pottery from the site is not well preserved and of limited quantity.<sup>174</sup> The early phases yield artifacts of mainly local manufacture, but from the 7th century onwards their number decreases.<sup>175</sup> Faunal data from Vitsa are very important, as many goat, sheep and cow bones are found in different layers of the settlement.<sup>176</sup> This may be evidence of shepherding, but may also owe to the fact that the site would host sacrificial rites. Nevertheless, since these remains appear throughout the entire site, it is more probable that the bones are evidence of pastoralism, the most important economic activity in Epirus. In summary, Dodona may have been visited mainly by shepherds in its earliest stages.

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**166** Vokotopoulou, 1985, 195 and 198; 1987, 83.

**167** Vokotopoulou, 1985, 195–198.

**168** Domínguez, 2015, 120.

**169** Cataloged as Wall 43.

**170** Its original size was ca. 12.50 x 6.60 m. In later times it expanded and acquired an apsidal shape, reaching 13.50 m. long (Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 94).

**171** Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 100.

**172** *Ibidem*, 309 and 420; Domínguez, 2015, 120.

**173** Piccinini, 2012, 164.

**174** Wardle, 1993, 124.

**175** Vokotopoulou, 1987, 61–62.

**176** Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 294.

### 2.4.3 Archaic evidence

The sanctuary gradually received more visitors, as both the material and literary evidence reveal, becoming the most important religious center in northwestern Greece. The most striking feature of this development is the absence of buildings until at least the 5th century. Why did Dodona remain an open-air sanctuary until its monumentalization in the Classical period? In order to answer this question we should look to the history and materiality of the shrine, a place strongly shaped by the dynamics between Epirus and its neighbor areas. Moreover, in the Archaic period, Corinthians – and probably also Euboeans – established contacts with some communities in the mainland and neighboring islands, including Dodona. Their presence in Epirus is referenced in several myths and proverbs.<sup>177</sup> But the votive offerings found at the sanctuary form the most important part of our account.

#### 2.4.3.1 Votive offerings

Votives come in many materials, shapes and sizes. A large number of them were made of bronze, which is usually linked to an aristocratic context. Several of these objects, such as craterae, are characteristic of the *symposium*. Generally speaking, there is not a drastic change in the types of materials that were offered in the previous phase, but the amount and variety increase. A central problem for interpreting this evidence is the lack of precise find-spots in the archaeological reports, especially in the three seasons directed by Carapanos. For this reason, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether votives tended to be deposited in the designated locations or if visitors to the site deposited them randomly.

Tripods, present in the archaeological record since the end of the Dark Age, appear also in the Archaic period, some of them miniatures and others of more typical proportions. The miniatures were undoubtedly offerings. Of these only one is entirely preserved; it dates to the 5th century, the Classical period, measures 12x5 cm,<sup>178</sup> and bears an inscription: Τερψικλῆς: τῶι Δι Ναίωι ῥαψωιδὸς ἀνέθ(η)κε (“Terpsikles, the rhapsode, dedicated [me/this] to Zeus Naios”).<sup>179</sup> In the leg of another miniature tripod from the 4th-3rd century we find another dedication: Κλέαρχος Διομέδοντος ῥαψωιδὸς μ’ ἀνέθ<η>κε (“Klearchos, son of Diomedon, the rhapsode, dedicated me”).<sup>180</sup> Most of the tripods found at Dodona, however, are larger and earlier, dating mainly to the 6th and 5th centuries, after which time their frequency decreases. Generally, their feet depict the head of a Gorgon<sup>181</sup> or are made to resemble the paws of

<sup>177</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 45–72.

<sup>178</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 217.

<sup>179</sup> MN At. No. 450: *SGDI* 5786; Dieterle, 2007, 375, F408.

<sup>180</sup> Paris, Cabinet des Medailles: Cabanes, 1988b, 53.

<sup>181</sup> MA Io. No. 4909 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F423. MA Io. No. 4904 (end of the 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F422.

real and mythic animals (lion/sphinx or griffin/eagle)<sup>182</sup>. Another inscribed tripod bears writing on two of its legs: 1) Διὶ δῶρον ἀνέθηκε πόλις 2) Λεχωϊῶν (“The polis of the Lechoians dedicated [this] as a present for Zeus”).<sup>183</sup>

Some similarities with the figurines of the Geometric period still prevail, since the most typical statuette is the warrior with shield and spear.<sup>184</sup> Other anthropomorphic statuettes include depictions of horse-riders,<sup>185</sup> a man with bear,<sup>186</sup> a musician playing the lyre,<sup>187</sup> kouroi,<sup>188</sup> and two symposiasts.<sup>189</sup> Among the most famous is a young female runner made in a Lakonian workshop.<sup>190</sup> The girl wears a short chiton with a belt over her hips; scholars have connected it with the agonistic competitions mentioned by some ancient authors, primarily the Heraia in Olympia, and that it may have been dedicated as part of a pre-nuptial initiation ritual.<sup>191</sup>

Zeus, as the main deity of Dodona, has great prominence in the offerings. The most remarkable ones are statuettes of Zeus Keraunios, with at least seven specimens from the 6th to the 5th cents.<sup>192</sup> The posture, which depicts a male figure about to hurl a lightning bolt, is unique enough to identify it as Zeus, even when the weapon itself is not preserved. Zeus is not the only divine being represented in the offerings

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**182** MA At. No. 414 (first half of the 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F413; MA Io. No. 177 (6th-5th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F418; MA Io. No. 4908 (6th-5th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F420. MA Io. No. 4919 (6th-5th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F421. MN At. No. 390 (end of Archaic Age and beginning of the Classical; miniature tripod): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F404. MN At. No. 391 (end of Archaic Age and beginning of the Classical; miniature tripod): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F406. MN At. No. 392 (end of Archaic Age and beginning of the Classical; miniature tripod): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F405. MN At. No. 393 (end of Archaic Age and beginning of the Classical; miniature tripod): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F407. MA Io. No. 2947 (end of Archaic Age): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F409.

**183** MN At. No. 451 (5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F411.

**184** At least six pieces. MA Io. No. 4914 (mid of the 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 210–211 and 368, F143. MA Ber. No. 10560 (540–530): Dieterle, 2007, 210–211 and 368, F145. MA Io. No. 4913 (530–520): Dieterle, 2007, 210–211 and 368, F142. MA Io. No. 1411 (530–510): Dieterle, 2007, 210–211 and 368, F144. MA Ber. No. 7470 (ca. 510 or beginning of the 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 210–211 and 368, F146.

**185** MA At. No. 27 (575–560): Dieterle, 2007, 366, F61. MA At. No. 26 (550–525): Dieterle, 2007, 216 and 368, F160.

**186** MA Io. No. 4903 (525–500): Dieterle, 2007, 369, F162.

**187** S.Pedro Hermitage B 613 (ca. 460): Dieterle, 2007, 213 and 368, F149.

**188** MA At. No. 30 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 366, F60.

**189** MA Io. No. 4910 (600–550): Dieterle, 2007, 211 and 368, F147. Lon.BM 1954.10–18–1 (second half of the 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 211–212 and 368, F148.

**190** MA At. No. 24 (ca. 550): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F89.

**191** Serwint, 1993, 410–411 and 418.

**192** AM Io. No. 4915 (half of the 6th cent.): Parke, 1967, 275, No. 8 (“striding naked warrior”, not Zeus); Rolley, 1994, 275 (teenager, not Zeus); Dieterle, 2007, 182–184 and 366, F62. Múnich, SAG No. 4339 (530–520): Dieterle, 2007, 182–184 and 366, F63. MA Ber. No. 10561 (last decade of the 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 182–184 and 366, F64. MA At. No. 31 (5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 182–184 and 366, F66. MA At. No. 32 (5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 182–184 and 366, F67. MA At. No. 16546 (480–470): Dieterle, 2007, 182–184 366, F65. Louvre No. 158 (ca. 450): Walter-Karydi, 1981, 21 (No. 56), 32 and 40, Abb. 47. MA Io. No. 4297 (ca. 450, a silver appliqué originally attached to a vase): Dieterle, 2007, 374, F371.

at Dodona. Indeed, archaeologists have also discovered small sculptures of Artemis<sup>193</sup> and Apollo,<sup>194</sup> as well as other mythological figures, such as Pegasus,<sup>195</sup> a sphinx,<sup>196</sup> and a satyr.<sup>197</sup>

With regard to animals, lions are still dedicated in the Archaic period,<sup>198</sup> as are eagles, an icon of both Zeus and Epirus. The best example is of the bird standing on a lotus flower. This piece probably crowned the head of a scepter, or could have been part of a larger statue.<sup>199</sup> Another eagle, 35 cm. long, has also been recovered.<sup>200</sup> Statuettes of goats,<sup>201</sup> deer,<sup>202</sup> roosters,<sup>203</sup> snakes,<sup>204</sup> and bulls<sup>205</sup> are likewise found at the site. Miniature bronze torches form one of the most idiosyncratic categories of the assemblage.<sup>206</sup> It is likely that most of these objects were attached to vases.<sup>207</sup>

My intention is not just to present a list of the archaeological findings, but rather to analyze their meaning in context. I will deal with the figurines of gods in the chapter four, where I discuss which divinities were worshipped in Dodona. From the representation of animals, one may surmise that visitors to the site sometimes deposited sculptures related to their lives. As such, the figurines could reflect economic activities, such as shepherding or farming (goats, bulls, roosters) and hunting (deers). This was the opinion entertained by Hammond, who suggested they were dedicated

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**193** Only one case, MA Ber. No. 7971 (560–550): Dieterle, 2007, 202 and 367, F90. Found during the excavations directed by Carapanos, but not published in his work; it is not clear if it truly comes from Dodona, although most scholar support this origin (Dieterle, 2007, 202).

**194** One assured, Par.Lo. MNC 1239 (half of the 6th cent., with text: Ἐτυμοκλέδας ἀνέθηκε, “Etimokles dedicated it”): Dieterle, 2007, 203 and 366, F59. Maybe also MA At. No. 21 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 203 and 369, F170 (*kouros*). There is another piece, MA At. No. 26, cited above as “horse-rider”. Carapanos cataloged it as Apollo, but later researchers reject this theory.

**195** MA At. No. 71 (600–500): Dieterle, 2007, 371, F243. MA Io. No. 4929 (a lamina, 6th cent., maybe earlier): Dieterle, 2007, 374, F372.

**196** MA At. No. 73 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 369, F164.

**197** MA At. No. 22 (ca. 530): Dieterle, 2007, 207 and 366, F70.

**198** MA Io. No. 2674 (beginning of 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 213 and 368, F158. MA Io. not found (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 213 and 368, F157. MA Io. No. 5829 (ca. 560): Dieterle, 2007, 213 and 368, F156. MA At. No. 94 (relief, no dating): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F107.

**199** MA Io. No. 2675 (500–450): Dieterle, 2007, 194 and 365, F39.

**200** MA Ber. No. 10590 (ca. 470): Dieterle, 2007, 194 and 365, F39.

**201** At least three, MA At. No. 54 (ca. 540): Dieterle, 2007, 212 and 368, F152. MA Io. No. 4911 (ca. 510): Dieterle, 2007, 212–213 and 368, F153. MA Ber. No. 10584 (beginning of 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 212–213 and 368, F155. MA Io. not found (beginning of 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 212 and 368, F154.

**202** MA At. No. 52 (half of 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 215 and 373, F329.

**203** MA Io. No. 2753 (6th-5th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 369, F166. Probably attached to a mirror.

**204** MA Io. No. 141 (half of the 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F116.

**205** Private collection (ca. 500): Dieterle, 2007, 196 and 367, F104. Par.Lo. MNC 1782 (6th-5th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F104a. MA Io. No. 156 (Archaic): Dieterle, 2007, 374, F373. Two more pieces with uncertain dating, MA At. No. 56: Dieterle, 2007, 367, F105. MA At. No. 57: Dieterle, 2007, 367, F106.

**206** MA At. No. 269 (half of 6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 368, F121.

**207** MA At. No. 4928 (5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 371, F264.

in an effort to improve their business by asking for better pastures, etc.<sup>208</sup> The archaeological record, however, does not show an greater number of these animals vis-à-vis other species, such as snakes and eagles. It is possible that the figurines could instead be linked to sacrifices performed in the shrine and/or for a specific cult. Bulls and eagles, for example, might be related to Zeus. Unfortunately, there has not yet been an osteologic study of the bones found in Dodona, which appear mainly in and around building O and the theater. Presence of animal bones in the theater is surely due to its function as arena in Imperial times.<sup>209</sup> It is not unreasonable to assume that sacrifices took place within the sacred space. As Strootman explains, theaters were in Hellenistic kingdoms the principal stages for the enactment of royal rituals.<sup>210</sup> Pyrrhus may have used it for this purpose, but there is not enough information to confirm this.

The archaeological remains of archaic Dodona also contain sculpture in relief. In this medium we find a deer,<sup>211</sup> a warrior,<sup>212</sup> a horse-rider,<sup>213</sup> and a depiction in a cuirass of the contest between Herakles and Apollo.<sup>214</sup> Renditions of this famous episode of Greek mythology, the earliest iconographic examples of which date to the 8th century, became more popular after the First Sacred War.<sup>215</sup> Our exemplar from Dodona was found in building A.

As in previous centuries, weapons, especially shields<sup>216</sup> and axes,<sup>217</sup> are common offerings during this period. The presence of these objects is not surprising, since there were always conflicts, both in Epirus, which was fragmented into ethne, and in Greece as a whole. Another sort of votives is jewellery, with various examples, mainly in the form of rings.<sup>218</sup> As in grave goods, these are usually connected with the female sphere. With regard to bronze vases and plates, they evince the practice of *symposia*, celebrated by the Dodonaean and other regional elites.<sup>219</sup> The number and varieties of pieces is remarkable, with crateras, kylikes, oenochoes,<sup>220</sup> bowls, amphorae, and plates.<sup>221</sup> The two symposiast figurines (discussed above) can be under-

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**208** Hammond, 1997a, 25.

**209** Dakaris, *Praktika*, 1985, 44 (prytaneus, ox and sheep bones); Evangelidis and Dakaris, *Arch. Eph.*, 1959, 66 (several bones); Dakaris, *Arch. Eph.*, 1960, 35 (in the theater).

**210** Strootman, 2014, 61.

**211** MA At. No. 52 (half of 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 215 and 373, F329.

**212** MA At. No. 35 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 216 and 373, F327.

**213** MA At. No. 36 (ca. 550): Dieterle, 2007, 215–216 and 373, F328.

**214** MA At. No. 84 (Archaic or maybe 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 376, F476.

**215** Parke and Boardman, 1957.

**216** MA Io. No. 4926 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 375, F432. MA At. No. 325 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 224 and 375, F435. MA At. No. 836 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 376, F454. MA At. No. 91 (6th–5th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 224 and 375, F433.

**217** MBenaki At. inv. 8045 (ca. 400): *SEG* XXX, 539; Piccinini, 2012, 220–221.

**218** MA Io. No. 4925 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 380, F618.

**219** Piccinini, 2012, 164–165 and 167–168.

**220** MA At. No. 314 (uncertain dating): Dieterle, 2007, 372, F315.

**221** For example, plate MA Ber. No. 10588 (6th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 222 and 371, F269.

stood in this context, as can some well preserved protomes of women,<sup>222</sup> satyrs,<sup>223</sup> and lions.<sup>224</sup> In fact, we must remember that most statuettes were once attached to vases, either as handles or adornments. Banquets were always important in the Greek world and Epirus is no exception. As we will see below, there is ample evidence for large gatherings at Dodona in later times, which were surely accompanied by *symposia*.

### 2.4.3.2 Oracular epigraphy

Decades of excavations have recovered an enormous number of small, thin lead (and, in a few cases, bronze) tablets,<sup>225</sup> on which pilgrims to the shrine wrote the questions they were to ask the oracle. I will treat the specific details and context of these consultations and provide an analysis of the verbal content of these tablets in later chapters. For the moment I would like to focus on their importance as archaeological documents.

Most of the tablets we have were found randomly and it seems that there was no ritual spot in which they were habitually deposited.<sup>226</sup> The oldest specimens are from

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**222** MA At. No. 339 (ca. 565–550): Dieterle, 2007, 220–221 and 370, F228; MA At. No. 340 (ca. 560–550): Dieterle, 2007, 220–221 and 370, F228a. MA Io. No. 4920 (ca. 530): Dieterle, 2007, 220–221 and 370, F229. MA At. No. 360 (ca. 510–500): Dieterle, 2007, 220–221 and 370, F230.

**223** MA Ber. No. 10583 (ca. 500–480, with the inscription TOI NAIΩ): Dieterle, 2007, 220–221 and 370, F256.

**224** MA At. No. 447 (ca. 475–450): Dieterle, 2007, 221 and 371, F246.

**225** The first epigraphic corpus was published by C. Carapanos (1878). Several works have periodically added more pieces to the catalog, mainly: *SIG*<sup>3</sup> (1160–1166), Parke (1976, 100–114), *SGDI* II (1557–1598) and most of the *SEG* volumes. In 2006, Lhôte prepared a high-quality corpus in which he translated 167 epigraphs into French along with a thorough study (*LOD*). Afterwards, in her book, Eidinow focused on oracles, examined the Dodonaean consultations and translated 151 of them into English, some of which were new. The correlation between both works is presented in *SEG* 58 (536). All of these publications, however, offer but a small number of the epigraphs that have been found. In 2013 a bigger corpus appeared: *Τα Χρηστηρια Ελασματα της Δωδωνής των Ανασκαφών Δ. Ευαγγελίδη* (*DVC*; Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis). It consists of two volumes which describe 1380 tablets, containing a total 4216 epigraphs –one plaque may have several inscriptions; a third volume, with images, is still in press. All of these consultations were found during the campaigns directed by Evangelidis, which means that those from the excavations of Dakaris onwards have yet to be described. Only a few of them have been published in periodicals. *DVC* has opened multiple approaches to scholars and has become one of the most important topics in Greek epigraphic research.

**226** Carapanos identified a well that contained many objects, but it seems to have functioned as a garbage site. It was connected to the basilica, in the northwestern part. Inside, archaeologists found votive offerings and plaques, primarily (Dakaris, 1971b, 36; Parke, 1967, 101). As it was associated to the Christian building, one might think that it was used in later times for throwing all “pagan” or out-of-fashion objects. Evangelidis mentions a small pit or well (ὕποθέτη) two meters northwest from a Roman tomb (1935, 222). Meyer refers to another one in the naiskos of Zeus, where some objects from Classical times were found (2012, 146), but no oracular consultations were reported there.



the 6th century<sup>227</sup> and it appears that after the Roman conquest in 167 this method of consultation is abandoned.<sup>228</sup> We are therefore dealing with a practice that extended through a long period of time and reached its apex in the 5th and 4th centuries, according to the conventional datings, mainly *DVC*, although not all scholars agree.<sup>229</sup> From that time onwards the number seems to decrease for no apparent reason. It is possible, however, that more were deposited but were destroyed or placed in a spot yet to be found.

The production of this kind of lead plaque requires the use of kilns, which were likely located in Dodona. Nevertheless, because of their minute size, they could have been imported but this is less probable, since we know of no other place where the plaques were employed. The importation therefore concerned just the raw material. Lead was a byproduct of silver extraction<sup>230</sup> and the Greek silver mines we know of lay outside Epirus. This means that the sanctuary imported the material. Archaeologists have not yet found possible sites for the manufacture of these lead plaques, but considering the importance of Dodona and its development during this time period, it may be safe to assume some existed in the locality.

#### 2.4.3.3 Pottery

Pottery is scarcely mentioned in Dodonaean studies, not only because scholars have paid more attention to other types of evidence, such as bronze offerings or lead tablets, but also due to the remarkably scant number of pottery fragments found in Dodona. For example, from the Archaic period we have the handle of a vase with two holes<sup>231</sup> and two shards of a Protocorinthian vase.<sup>232</sup> The fact that most of the pottery from Dodona – at least the published – dates to the Bronze Age, in the first phases of the site's development, is noteworthy.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> According to Lhôte, only *LOD* 41 and 77 belong to this century (2006, 11), but *DVC* has added several more: No. 3, 157B, 158B, 411A, 412A, 413B, 414B, 415A, 416B, 1042A, 1978A, 1993A, 1996B, 2158B, 2368A, 2371B, 2381A, 2382B, 2660A, 2662B, 3549A, 3619A, 3621A, 3828A, 3829A, 3830A and 4150A. Among these, only No. 3549A seems to have been written in the first half of the 6th century, whereas the others most probably date to the second half.

<sup>228</sup> Lhôte, 2006, 11–21.

<sup>229</sup> In a recent paper, Lhôte criticizes the lack of evidence for that dating by the editors of *DVC* and argues for a major revision that might lead to a later chronology (Lhôte, 2018). Also Meyer (2013, 20, n. 33) and Méndez Dosuna (2016, 119). However, at the time of writing, no major revision has taken place.

<sup>230</sup> Stos-Gale and Gale, 1982, 467.

<sup>231</sup> Dakaris, *Praktika*, 1967, 47–48 and πίν. 34α.

<sup>232</sup> Daux, 1959, 673.

<sup>233</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 88–94.



## 2.5 Classical Epirus and the growth of the Molossian kingdom

According to some scholars, Epirus during Archaic and Classical periods had around 300,000 inhabitants,<sup>234</sup> a rather strong demography for Antiquity. This was apparently due to the relative paucity of conflicts, since Epirus was not involved in most of the Hellenic struggles. Yet the relationship between *ethne* was probably not too peaceful. Whatever the cause, by the end of the Classical period many centers, some of them fortified, covered the entire region.<sup>235</sup>

In this process of urban growth, the political entity that would initiate a process that ended with the formation of a federal state encompassing the whole of Epirus was the kingdom of Molossia. This *ethnos* was one of the Epirote communities that participated in the conflict between Kerkyra and Corinth in the prolegomena to the Peloponnesian War. In his description of the confrontation and his catalogue of the Corinthian allies, Thucydides mentions some barbarian forces:

... There were a thousand Chaonian barbarians, who were not governed by a king but by Photys and Nicanor, members of the ruling family, who were governing as presidents for a term of one year. Thesprotians, who also have no king, joined the Chaonians in the campaign. The Molossians and Atintanians were led by Sabylinthus, regent for King Tharyps, who was still a child; and the Paravaeans were led by King Oroedus. There were one thousand Orestians, whose king was Antiochus. He had entrusted their command to Oroedus and they marched with the Paravaeans.<sup>236</sup>

Unfortunately for the Epirotes, due to their inexperience in this kind of battles they were too confident and in the fight against Akarnanians, instead of preparing a military camp, they attacked directly. The result was a resounding disaster and the “barbarian” troops fled.<sup>237</sup>

We can find relevant information in the text regarding the political organization of these *ethne*. In the case of Chaonians, Thucydides talks about Photius and Nicanor as members of the ruling family (ἐκ τοῦ ἀρχικοῦ γένους), whereas Thesprotians were kingless (ἀβασίλευτοι). Thus, there was no kingship among them, but rather oligarchy. The Molossians and Atintanians, on the other hand, had the same monarch,<sup>238</sup> Tharyps, who, being under age, had Sabylinthus as regent. Similarly, Oroedus and Anthiocus were sovereigns of the Paravaeans and Orestians, respectively.

We may assume that oligarchy and kingship were the main forms of political organization in Epirus. The Molossian king during the conflict described by Thucydides was Tharyps (430?-390?) and his dynasty, the Aeacids, were to rule this territory until the last of them, Deidameia, died in 232 BCE leaving no heirs. The (mythical) founder

<sup>234</sup> Hammond, 1997a, 27.

<sup>235</sup> Andréou, 1997, 102.

<sup>236</sup> Thuc., 2, 80, 5–6, trans. W. Blanco.

<sup>237</sup> Thuc., 2, 81, 3–6.

<sup>238</sup> Because they were neighborhood *ethne* (Cabanes, 2011, 83).

of their noble lineage was Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, who participated in the Trojan War. Pausanias explains that there were fifteen generations between Neoptolemus<sup>239</sup> and Tharyps, though he gives no names.<sup>240</sup> On the other hand, in his *Life of Pyrrhus* Plutarch simply begins his treatment from Tharyps onwards.<sup>241</sup> The existence of this king is also attested epigraphically;<sup>242</sup> the literary sources go as far back as his grandfather.<sup>243</sup>

Admetus, as the grandfather of Tharyps is known, seems to have been the ruler of Molossia when Themistokles was ostracized around 470. Several authors, Thucydides being the earliest one, explain that after the Athenian politician was rejected in Kerkyra, he went to Molossia for refuge. The relationship between Admetus and Themistokles was tense due to the Athenian's previous opposition of some of the Epirote monarch's requests. Nevertheless, Admetus received him and helped him flee to Asia Minor.<sup>244</sup> Some scholars also suggest that Pindar might have been a *proxenos* of the Molossian king since he seems to relate that much in one of his *Nemeans*. The reference, however, is not entirely clear and Pindar does not explicitly mention the king's name.<sup>245</sup>

Returning to Tharyps, an Attic inscription dated to 343/342 registers king Arybas of Molossia as an Athenian citizen, just as his father (πατήρ) and his grandfather (πάππῳ),<sup>246</sup> Alketas I and Tharyps, respectively, had been. The reference is clear evidence of the amicable relationship between both regions and is surely linked to the time that Tharyps spent in Athens during his childhood,<sup>247</sup> ca. 428–424.<sup>248</sup> This information may contradict a fragment of Thucydides, in which the Molossians and other Epirote ethne are said to have supported Corinth, that is to say, the Spartan side, in battle. One may reconcile both pieces of evidence by supposing that the Molossians eventually shifted their alliance. Some studies suggest that the performance of *Andromache* by Euripides, which took place in Athens around 425, might show

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**239** Also known as Pyrrhus. Pausanias calls him in this way, indeed.

**240** Paus., 1, 11, 1.

**241** Plut., *Pyrrh.* 1, 2–4.

**242** Tod *GHI* 2, n. 173, ll. 2–4.

**243** It is even possible to find an earlier member of the Molossian court. Herodotus narrates the episode of the daughter of Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon, who looked for a husband during the Olympic Games. One of the suitors was Alkonos, of the Molossians. He is likely to pertain to the royal family. Despite of the anecdotal character of this reference, this information allows us to see that monarchy was present in this region from at least the Archaic Age. In the same vein, Plutarch mentions a probably mythical Molossian king called Edoneos (Plut., *Thes.* 30–35) and, in the *Odyssey*, Pheidon is the ruler of Thesprotia (14, 316, 321, 331 and 336; 19, 287).

**244** Thuc., 1, 136–137; Nep., *Them.* 8, 3; Plut., *Them.* 2, 5; Aristodem., *FGrHis* 104 F10, 1–2; Aristid., *Four*, 383.

**245** Pind., *Nem.* 07, 64–67. Piccinini, 2017, 111–118, rejects this theory. Hornblower, 2004, 179–18 thinks that it could have also been *proxenos* of Aegina.

**246** Tod, *GHI* 2, 173, ll. 2–4.

**247** Iust., *Ep.* 17, 3, 10.

**248** Piccinini, 2015b, 472.

traces of this political reconciliation, since the plot narrates a version of the mythic origins of the Molossian kingdom.<sup>249</sup> If this theory is right, Molossia may have changed sides in 429 or a bit later. According to Hammond, the Athenian victory in Ambrakia made the Molossians to reconsider their position.<sup>250</sup>

There are two oracular consultations with the name Tharyps (Θάρυπος).<sup>251</sup> However, it is not possible to ascertain whether they were the king's or someone else's. Our written sources, on the other hand, furnish us with some interesting information. According to Justin, he introduced laws, a senate, annual magistrates, the constitution of the Republic, and a more civilized way of life.<sup>252</sup> Plutarch adds that Tharyps brought the art of writing to Molossia.<sup>253</sup> These assertions are probably exaggerated, but the transformation of the Molossian territory, its sites and population, seems to have begun at the end of the 5th century.<sup>254</sup>

The kingdom expanded over further territories and annexed other ethne, as we can infer from the literature. In his *Periplus*, written in the mid-4th century BCE, Pseudo-Scylax provides a portrait of Epirus.<sup>255</sup> When talking about Molossia, the author states that they controlled the coastal area between the Louros and Arachtus rivers, around 8 km. This means that by mid-4th century the Molossians, originally from the inland, had already reached the Ambrakian gulf. This expansion probably took place during the kingdom of Alketas I (390?-370?), son of Tharyps.<sup>256</sup>

After being forced to go into exile in 385, Alketas I took refuge in Syracuse, where Dionysius I ruled as tyrant.<sup>257</sup> Dionysius I helped him recover the throne, although his Illyrian troops killed, as Diodorus says, 15,000 Molossians in the process. Alketas defeated them with help from Sparta.<sup>258</sup> According to Xenophon, Jason of Pherae conducted the foreign affairs of the Epirote king, if not the kingdom entire.<sup>259</sup>

249 Gravani, 2004, 561; Kittelä, 2013, 40.

250 Hammond, 1967, 506–507.

251 DVC 2148A (Θάρυπος) and 3368B (Θάρ(υ)πος).

252 Iust., *Ep.* 17, 3, 12–13. We must be aware that the Roman concepts of senate and a constitution of the Republic are Justin's.

253 Plut., *Pyrrh.* 1, 4.

254 Domínguez, 2018, 6–10.

255 Scyl., *Per.* 28–33.

256 Plut., *Pyrrh.* 1, 5; Paus., 1, 11, 3.

257 For the epigraph IG II<sup>2</sup>, 101 (“Alketas, son of Leptinus, Syracusan”), found in Attica, and the relationship between the king Alketas and Leptinus, from the royal family of Syracuse, see Piccinini, 2015b.

258 Diod.Sic., 15, 13, 1–3.

259 Xen., *Hell.* 1, 7.

### 2.5.1 Dodona, the Molossian meeting place

Sanctuaries become important in politics when they are designated as official meeting places of the elite. There is ample evidence that Dodona was such scenery for meetings attested epigraphically in the first half of the 4th century. Moreover, thanks to the archaeological remains on the site it is possible to reconstruct, at least partially, the first political steps of Molossia as a federal state, ie. a *koinon* ruled by kings. This process of Molossian expansion was neither constant nor continuous, and it also experienced periods of territorial contraction.<sup>260</sup>

The *terminus ante quem* for the emergence of the Molossian *Koinon* is around the 370s. A few documents from this period evince the growing importance of Molossian power outside the territory's frontiers. One of these documents, a register of the members of the Second Athenian League, mentions the Molossian king, Alketas I, and his son, Neoptolemus.<sup>261</sup> On this theme, Diodorus discusses the friendly relationship entertained between the Athenian general Timotheus and Alketas,<sup>262</sup> and Nepos highlights the fluent contacts between Athens and Molossia.<sup>263</sup> We should also not forget the epigraps granting Athenian citizenship to the Molossian kings from Tharyps onwards.<sup>264</sup> Another remarkable source is a list of *theorodokoi*, the receptors of sacred envoys, from Epidauros, who were sent to different places to announce the celebration of the Asklepeia. Some of them headed for northwest Greece to visit the Thesprotians, Molossians, Chaonians, and the centers of Phoenike, Ambrakia, Cassope and Pandosia. The individual who received them among the Molossians was a man called Tharyps, likely a member of the royal family.<sup>265</sup>

The first source to mention the Molossian state – without using the term *koinon* – in an official event is a limestone stele with two inscriptions, found in Dodona and dated to 370 – 378.<sup>266</sup> The stele contains two inscriptions granting citizenship to several people, listing the officers present at the event – a *prostates* (eponimus magistrate), a *grammateus* (secretary), and a few *damiorgoi* (magistrates),<sup>267</sup> all of them belonging to the Molossian state (Μολοσσῶν) and, at the same time, to different *ethne*. This suggests that there was already a *koinon*.<sup>268</sup> The close dating is possible because the text mentions the king Neoptolemus (370? – 360?), son of Alketas I. Both the *pros-*

<sup>260</sup> For example, during the reign of Alexander I (Domínguez, 2014, 208 – 209).

<sup>261</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 43 B, ll. 13 – 14. Epigraph dated on ca. 375 (Corvisier, 1999, 396).

<sup>262</sup> *Diod.Sic.*, 15, 36, 5.

<sup>263</sup> *Nep.*, *Timoth.* 2, 1.

<sup>264</sup> *Tod*, *GHI*, 2, 173, ll. 2 – 4.

<sup>265</sup> *IG* IV<sup>2</sup>, 95. Uncertain dating, probably ca. 360, during the period of Alketas I.

<sup>266</sup> *SEG* XV, 384.

<sup>267</sup> A complete list of ten *damiorgoi* in the first case and just six in the second case, with the same order, but with the end missing; it probably continued on another stone and ended in a similar way.

<sup>268</sup> Hammond, 1967, 525 – 527; Larsen, 1968, 276 – 277; Cabanes, 1999, 375 – 376.

*tates* and the *grammateus* are given the ethnic Ἀρκτᾶνος (Arktan).<sup>269</sup> The *damiorgoi* are described as Ἀρκτᾶνος Εὐρυμεναίων (Arktan, Eurymenaian, two ethnic levels), Τριπολιτᾶν (Tripolitan), Κελαίθων (Kelaithan), Πειάλων (Peialan), Γενφαίων (Genuaian), Ἐθνεστών (Ethnestan), Τριφυλᾶν (Triphylan), Ὀμφάλων (Omphalian), Ὀνοπέρνων (Onopernian) and Ἀμύμων (Amymnan). Not all of these ethne hailed from Molossia; the Kelaithans were Thesprotians and the Peialans were from Thessaly. It is likely that this document provides evidence the strength and territorial expansion of the Molossians.<sup>270</sup>

Because the inscription is dated to 370–368, this will be our point of reference for the beginning of the Molossian *koinon*.<sup>271</sup> Hammond suggests that this federal entity may have existed some years earlier, around 386, based on the reference to Alketas I recovering the throne with the support of Dionysius of Syracuse and fighting against the Illyrians, who killed 15,000 Molossians. Such a great number of forces could mean that there was already a *koinon* made up of many ethne.<sup>272</sup> Although this hypothesis is still in need of more and stronger evidence, I do think that the *koinon* was formed some time in the 370's, since granting honorary citizenship requires that the state doing it is already consolidated.

By this time the sanctuary of Dodona has become an important gathering center, the place where events of consequence, such as the one mentioned above, take place and where stelai and bronze plaques are set up for posterity. The transformation of the shrine would accelerate over the course of the 4th century, with the building of several structures and the erection of objects related to the religious and political spheres. From this point onwards Dodona would play an active role in the growth of Molossia, as the main sacred site for the inhabitants of the territory.

Alketas I had at least two sons, Neoptolemus I and Arybas,<sup>273</sup> who decided to rule together upon their father's death.<sup>274</sup> There is no information about these years. The next episode for which we have evidence took place in 358/357, when Arybas, running the kingdom alone, agreed to the marriage between Olympias – initially called Polyxena –,<sup>275</sup> daughter of Neoptolemus I, and Philip II of Macedonia.<sup>276</sup>

**269** The ethnic is always registered in the genitive case, but I use the nominative in my English translation.

**270** Davies, 2000, 255.

**271** The word *koinon* is not attested epigraphically until ca. 330. The first one is C2, ll. 15–16: "... τὸ κοινὸν τ[ὸν Μο]- / λоссών...".

**272** Hammond, 1967, 533; cf. Diod.Sic., 15, 13, 3.

**273** Neoptolemus has been mentioned before as a member of the Second Athenian League (*IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 43 B, 1. 13–14). Arybas may have been the consultant of the oracular plaque *DVC* 2111A (...Ἀρύβα[ι]...).

**274** Paus., 1, 11, 3. Corvisier is probably right when he states that Neoptolemus might have become king first ca. 370 and was joined his brother Arybas ca. 368 (1999, 397).

**275** Greenwalt suggests, based on Plutarch (Alex. 2, 2), that it was Perdikkas II who organized the marriage when Philip and Olympias were still teenagers and met each other in a festival in Samothrace (2010, 288–289).

This was a clever move, since Molossia's eastern neighbor was very powerful and the marriage implied that from that time onwards the development of Epirus, more specifically Molossia, would be tied to that of Macedonia. The ceremony took place at the end of 358<sup>277</sup> or 357.<sup>278</sup>

According to Diodorus, Arybas died in 342–341 and the next king was not his son, Aeacides, but Alexander I, supported by Philip II.<sup>279</sup> The reference, however, might be mistaken. The most reasonable version is told by Justin, according to whom Philip II deposed Arybas and helped his nephew and brother-in-law Alexander become king<sup>280</sup> some time between 349 and 342.<sup>281</sup> The former monarch aged and finally died in exile.<sup>282</sup>

The period of Alexander I<sup>283</sup> was characterized by narrow contacts between Molossia and Macedonia and, sometimes, a common foreign policy. We can see this during Philip II's siege of Ambrakia in 343/342. After defeating this city, the Macedonian troops attacked Pandosia, Boucheta, and Elateia. All of them fell and Philip II handed them over to Alexander I.<sup>284</sup> A few years later, when Taranto asked for help in their war against the Bruttians, the Molossian sovereign brought his army to Italy,<sup>285</sup> where he also confronted Lucans and Apulians, and signed alliances with the Metapontines and Romans, among others. Alexander I's death came while he was on campaign in 331, supposedly in a battle near the Italic center of Pandosia.<sup>286</sup> There is one more source to take into account: *SGDI* 1334, a decree from Dodona that registers a

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**276** Iust., *Ep.* 7, 6, 11. Also, Plut., *Alex.* 2, 2; Paus., 1, 11, 1; Iust., *Ep.* 7, 6, 10, Oros., *Hist.* 3, 12, 8. Justin does not mention Alketas I, but goes directly from Tharyps to Neoptolemus I. He does not refer to the diarchy, either, and considers Arybas as a cousin of Olympias and, therefore, nephew of Neoptolemus I (7, 6, 11). Plutarch does not mention Neoptolemus, so Arybas inherits the throne from Alketas I (*Pyrrh.* 1, 6). Orosius wrongly says that Olympias was the daughter of Arybas.

**277** Hammond, 1967, 545.

**278** Errington, 1975, 41.

**279** Diod.Sic., 16, 72, 1.

**280** Iust., *Ep.* 7, 6, 12; 8, 6, 5–7.

**281** For this question, still open, see Errington (1975, 47–48), Corvisier (1999, 396), Rhodes and Osborne (2003, 353), Cabanes (2004, 33), Lane Fox (2011, 353).

**282** Iust., *Ep.* 7, 6, 12; Orosio, *Hist.* 3, 12, 8. Probably in Athens (J.-N. Corvisier, 1999, 396; Domínguez, 2014, 206–207), because there is an Attic epigraph where we can read that Arybas and his descendants were considered citizens (Tod *GHI* 2, n. 173, ll. 3–7).

**283** Again, there are two oracular consultations that may belong to a Molossian king, both in the same plaque: ἡ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Νε- / σπτολέμου υἱοῦ; (*DVC* 41A) and Τροία δᾶμ' Ἀλέ[ξανδρον] (*DVC* 42B). Apart from this document, there are a few more inscriptions, in which the name of Alexander appears (*SGDI* 1335, *SGDI* 1337, C6, and C74), but it is unclear if it refers to Alexander I or II.

**284** Theopomp., *FGrHis* 115 F206–207; Dem., *Halon.* 32.

**285** Concerning this expedition, Domínguez suggests that it could have been prepared along with the one led by Alexander III from Macedonia, his cousin, in Asia (2014, 235).

**286** Aeschin., *In Ctes.* 242; Iust., *Ep.* 12, 2, 1–15. According to Justin, the oracle of Delphi warned Alexander about the center of Pandosia and the Acheron river, and the king assumed that the Pythia was talking about Epirote places. This is clearly a post eventum episode (Domínguez, 2014, 221–223).

grant of *politeia* (equivalence-of-citizenship) in the times of king Alexander by the Molossian *Koinon* (Μολοσσῶν τὸ κοινόν).

Neoptolemus, son of Alexander I, succeeded to the throne but, due to his youth, his mother Cleopatra from Macedonia, daughter of Philip II, acted as regent. It is possible that she governed together with Olympias, who had returned to Epirus a few years before.<sup>287</sup> In fact, Olympias disputed with Athens about the right to use the cult space at Dodona. The Attic *polis* tried to carry out rituals in honor of Dione and embellish her cult statue, but the Molossian regent forbade them, arguing that the territory where the sanctuary stood was hers. According to accounts, the Athenians were spurned even though the oracle of Dodona had ordered the Athenians to do so.<sup>288</sup>

### 2.5.2 From open-air to monumentalized sanctuary

At the end of the 5th century and beginning of the 4th there was a major change in Dodona. The almost complete absence of buildings in the previous period led to continuous construction, especially in the cult area. Non-urbanized sanctuaries were not unusual in Greece, although most of the main shrines with temples are dated to the Archaic Age. It is noteworthy that Dodona was open-air until mid-Classical times and that archaeology, ancient literature and epigraphy provide so much information concerning its oracular activity many centuries before its monumentalization. One may ask why the Dodonaean landscape changed so much in the Classical period. The slow political development would have certainly contributed. Without powerful *poleis* or states in the vicinity, there would have been no entity to invest in the monumentalization of the site.<sup>289</sup> This, however, does not explain why there appears to have been temple of Zeus (however small) in the beginning. It seems to me that there was originally a deliberate intent to preserve the natural environment by keeping to a low degree of anthropization. The *Illiad's* reference to the selloi, the priests who did not wash their feet and slept on the ground, might be good evidence of this.<sup>290</sup>

A pivotal moment in the history of Dodona was the growth of the Molossian kingdom, which brought with it a transformation of the territory's networks and elite behavior in religious spaces. The aristocracy, too, and the royal court in particular, emphasized their Hellenicity through diverse mechanisms, such as by revitalizing and placing emphasis on heroic genealogies and, as I hope to show, by transforming Do-

<sup>287</sup> Hammond, 1967, 558; Baslez, 1999, 389. Both Cleopatra and Olympias are mentioned in a list from Cyrene of recipients of grain (*SEG IX*, 2, ll. 6, 10 and 22), a possible evidence of their ruling position (Carney, 1988, 396).

<sup>288</sup> Hyp., 4, 24–26.

<sup>289</sup> In Delphi, Delos and Olympia, where more states had a stronger control, the oldest cult structures are dated on 8th or 7th centuries (Fontenrose, 1978, 4–5; Morgan, 1990, 5 and 16).

<sup>290</sup> Hom., *Il.* 16, 233–235.



dona itself. This process also brought to the surface a discourse of regional identity developed to define the aspects that contributed to the union of the Molossian– and later Epirote – *ethne*, previously fragmented. The visibility of cult and civic areas at Dodona is closely linked to this.

The 4th century witnessed widespread growth in Dodona that lasted until Roman conquest. The acropolis was fortified and buildings were erected in the cult space. Diodorus talks about Alexander the Great's desire to construct new temples in Delos, Olympia, and Dodona,<sup>291</sup> an idea that was sustained by later kings. The Macedonian sovereign, however, was not the first one to renovate the Epirote sanctuary. Indeed, the *temenos* already had some structures. Sources refer to the sacred oak of Zeus as the centerpoint of the sanctuary. At first the tree was supposed to have been surrounded by cauldrons and tripods. This system was later altered due to the construction of the temple to Zeus.

### 2.5.2.1 The temple of Zeus – Building E1

*Ἡ Ἱερὰ Ὀικία*, literally “the Sacred House”, is the conventional name given to this temple, following Polybius.<sup>292</sup> Building E1, the oldest in the area, is widely thought to be the cult place of Zeus, although not all scholars support this theory.<sup>293</sup> The structure presents four different phases of construction before the Roman conquest and, perhaps, a fifth in later times.

The first temple was built at the end of the 5th century or the beginning of the 4th (FIG. 1).<sup>294</sup> It was originally a *naiskos*, measuring 4.10 x 6.40 m.<sup>295</sup> It had a *pro-naos*, no columns and a single *cella*. The ashlar blocks vary in size, from 1.25–1.40 x 0.55–0.80 x 0.22–0.24 m. An inner wall divided the space into two rooms and the smaller of these functioned as an entrance hall.<sup>296</sup> In the southeast corner archaeologists working under Evangelidis found several offerings and a small structure, 0.088 x 0.22 x 0.24 m, with three stones that bear the inscription ἁ τράπεζα (“the table”), dating to the 5th century.<sup>297</sup> Given its minute size, it is not likely to have functioned as an altar, but it may have had a secondary role.<sup>298</sup> Outside, south of the *naiskos*, there were remains of a hut from the Classical period, where priestesses may have dwelled.<sup>299</sup> Dakaris dated the structure by examining

<sup>291</sup> Diod.Sic., 18, 4, 4.

<sup>292</sup> Polyb., 4, 67, 3.

<sup>293</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 173.

<sup>294</sup> As most buildings in Dodona, the chronology is uncertain. In this case, end of the 5th century (Dakaris, 1971b, 40), ca. 400 (Hammond, 1967, 508), or first half of the 4th (Quantin, 2008, 15).

<sup>295</sup> Mylonopoulos, 2006, 190.

<sup>296</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 28–30.

<sup>297</sup> Evangelidis, *Praktika*, 1931, 86.

<sup>298</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 188.

<sup>299</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 59–60.



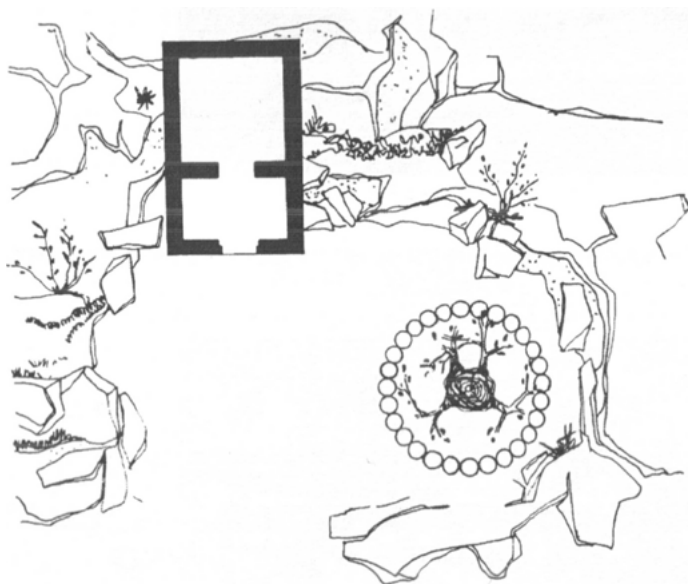


Fig. 1: Building E1, first phase (Evangelidis and Dakaris, *Arch. Eph.*, 1959, πίν. 6)

the terracotta fragments that were initially located on the roof.<sup>300</sup> At that time, the *naiskos* might not have served for the worship of Zeus, but rather to house the offerings to the god. Unfortunately, there is not enough data to either confirm or deny this hypothesis.<sup>301</sup>

There was a reorganization of the temple ca. 350 – 325 (FIG. 2).<sup>302</sup> A *peribolos* delimited the *temenos*, creating a closed area of 13 x 11.80 m unaligned with the *naiskos*, which stood near the northwest corner. If we assume that the sacred oak occupied this space, its presence and the orography may prompted this solution.<sup>303</sup> The height of the wall was 1.08 m. in the eastern side and 1.50 in the western end.<sup>304</sup> It is quite possible that rituals performed inside could have been seen from the outside.<sup>305</sup>

The architectonic development of building E1 leaves many unanswered questions. These are numerous and weighty enough to reject the theory of its cult function. Emmerling suggests that E1 could have been a treasury or an archive because

<sup>300</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 28–30 (cf. Evangelidis and Dakaris, *Arch. Eph.*, 1959, 39).

<sup>301</sup> Piccinini, 2016, 154–155.

<sup>302</sup> Parke, 1967, 117; Dakaris, 1971b, 41–42.

<sup>303</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 42.

<sup>304</sup> The height was never uniform due to the orography, since that area lies on the slope of the hill of the acropolis (Emmerling, 2012, 37–38).

<sup>305</sup> Mylonopoulos, 2006, 191. It is worth pointing out that this reconstruction is based on the few remains of this wall. (Emmerling, 2012, 30–33.)

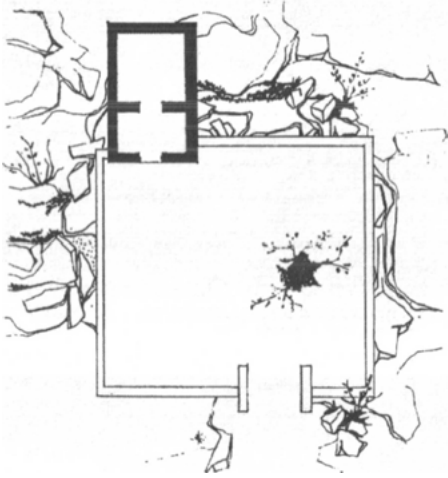


Fig. 2: Building E1, second phase (Dakaris, 1963, 44, Abb. 6)

the structure is rather different from that of other temples.<sup>306</sup> The main problem is that there is almost no data incontrovertibly supporting the hypothesis that Zeus was worshipped in the structure and just as little evidence to Emmerling's hypothesis, as she herself recognizes. Dakaris' datings are uncertain too. The terracottas of the roof used by him to establish a date for the *naiskos* ca. 400 could actually be from the end of the 4th century.<sup>307</sup> Another element that hinders our understanding of the structure is the *Diagonalkapitell*, a diagonal Ionic capital, which seems to be entirely one of a kind; its date spans from the 4th to the 3rd century.<sup>308</sup> Votive offerings may help to support the conventional theory of a worship site. Inside building E1 an 8th century figurine was found, dubbed the "Warrior Zeus,"<sup>309</sup> although its identification is uncertain. A bronze statuette of a seated woman with a dove on her lap was also unearthed.<sup>310</sup>

The above description is based on the materials discovered during excavation. For a better understanding of this building and its function, we must pay attention to the cult context, especially the oak, the most sacred element at Dodona, as sources attest. This topic will be examined later. For the moment, it is enough to say that I agree with the identification of building E1 as the temple of Zeus. Emmerling is correct to point out that there is no material evidence to confirm it. Her analysis, however, leaves out the fact that E1 appears to be the very first permanent building in the cult space of Dodona and that the structure was rebuilt and refurbished several times. It is reasonable to think that this structure was indeed the main temple. Fur-

<sup>306</sup> Emmerling., 2012 90–94 and 173–175.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 113–115.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 161–162.

<sup>309</sup> Currently lost (Dieterle, 2007, 181–182, F52).

<sup>310</sup> Alroth, 1989, 76.

thermore, as I will explain later, the presence of the sacred tree inside the *temenos* may elucidate why the temple was not originally located in the center and shed light on the way pilgrims interacted with the space and its elements.

### 2.5.2.2 The acropolis

The area 25 m. above the sanctuary level is virtually unexplored. Archaeologists have paid attention to the walls surrounding the complex, but not the inside. Dated to the second half of the 4th century,<sup>311</sup> the fortification covers a 750 m perimeter, ca. 3.5 ha, enough space for one thousand inhabitants. If the city were here, it would be the *asty*, and the total population of Dodona, taking into account those who lived in the *chora*, would be higher. Needless to say, the acropolis afforded the best refuge in times of instability and war.<sup>312</sup>

The walls were furnished with rectangular towers, mainly in the west and north sides. There are three in the south; two of them flank the southwestern entrance that leads to the theater and the sanctuary, and the third one, which is smaller, is located in the middle. At the doorstep of the southeast entrance there are fragments of bronze where the doors were placed. The better-preserved eastern door is 3.50 m wide and narrows in the center to a width of 2.50 m. Two holes for the doors have been identified.<sup>313</sup> Although there has been no excavation inside the acropolis itself, some structures are clearly visible. One of them is a cistern, carved into the rock. Two pillars supported its roof and the walls were weatherproofed.<sup>314</sup>

The function and content of the rest of the acropolis remains uncertain. It is not difficult to imagine that it contained houses and other civic buildings, although it is not clear if there were constructions inside. If that were the case, the main purpose of the site would have been to provide protection to those seeking refuge. A few inscriptions report the demonym Dodonaians, Δωδωναῖοι, who even in one case, if the reconstruction of the oracular consultation is right, considered the place a *polis*.<sup>315</sup> This topic will be discussed later. To summarize, it seems to me more likely that the acropolis was the *asty* of Dodona, where most of the population lived. The many amenities of the valley of Tcharacovitsa, together with the absence of another notable center in this area, make this hypothesis feasible.

<sup>311</sup> Kowalzig, 2007, 336.

<sup>312</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 72–73.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibidem*, 74.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibidem*, 75.

<sup>315</sup> *LOD* 14; *DVC* 268a (ἡ πόλις / [τῶν Δωδωναίων], dated to the end of the 5th century or beginning of the 4th; however, this could be misleading, however, and simply reflect the misuse of a common term); *DVC* 2519B; *SGDI* 1351; *SGDI* 1355; *SGDI* 1358; *SEG* LVII, 510, ll. 54–84.

### 2.5.2.3 Portable materials

There is a significant number of offerings and a much wider variety in the types of objects dedicated in the 5th and 4th centuries.<sup>316</sup> Bronze statuettes are common, beginning with deities and mythological figures. We find pieces depicting Athena,<sup>317</sup> Poseidon,<sup>318</sup> possibly Hermes,<sup>319</sup> Herakles,<sup>320</sup> and at least two maenads.<sup>321</sup> There are also several female statuettes. One such statuette, mentioned above, represents a seated woman with a dove on her lap.<sup>322</sup> A few small terracottas offer similar iconography. The first one, found in building E1, is of a woman sitting with a dove on her breast;<sup>323</sup> two other figures with similar motifs were found, but only the torsos remain.<sup>324</sup> Another bronze piece shows a woman with an apple in her hand.<sup>325</sup> A naked child with a dove in his hand appears to be an innovation of the *topos*, with the bird preserving its significance.<sup>326</sup> Animals are still present in the 5th and 4th centuries. Notable among these are representations of lions<sup>327</sup>, doves,<sup>328</sup> swans,<sup>329</sup> and a clay turtle<sup>330</sup>. The lack of domesticated animals is important and may point to a change in the kinds of pilgrims that visited Dodona, or, at the very least, a change in dedicatory practice.

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**316** Since datings are usually not specific enough to coincide with the chronological limit of this chapter and the following one, 4th century objects (in general) are included in the present discussion, and those of the second half of the 4th century pieces will be discussed later.

**317** MA At. No. 23 (second quarter of 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 200 and 367, F91. MA At. No. 88–89 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 200 and 367, F356.

**318** MA At. No. 12 (between 5th and 4th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 199 and 367, F82. It is not certain whether this is Poseidon or Zeus. The posture, straight and propping himself on something (not preserved), instead of about to hurl a weapon (bolt), suggest that it is likely the god of the sea.

**319** There are three statuettes of young boys which some scholars identify as Hermes. MA Io. No. 241 (5th–4th cents): Dieterle, 2007, 207 and 366, F75; Piccinini, 2012, 198–199 (Herakles). MA At. No. 13 (5th–4th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 207 and 366, F76. MA Io. No. 4906 (beginning of the 5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 207 and 366, F77.

**320** MA Io. No. 898: Dieterle, 2007, 206 and 368, F122. The object is not a statue of Herakles, but a bronze mace with the name of the hero written on it. The dating is uncertain, it could be from later than the Archaic. Herakles appears also in the relief of a plaque that was part of a mirror, MA Io. No. 761 (half of 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 206 and 373, F343. MA At. No. 14 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 206 and 367, F86.

**321** MA Ber. No. 10582 (5th cent. or ca. 480): Dieterle, 2007, 207, 213–214 and 368, F150. MA At. No. 19 (5th cent. or ca. 400): Dieterle, 2007, 207, 213–214 and 368, F151.

**322** MA At., unknown reference (5th–4th cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 193 and 367, F94.

**323** MA Io., No. 3401 (5th cent.): Alroth, 1989, 76, No. 5c.

**324** Unknown reference (5th–4th centus.): Alroth, 1989, 76, No. 5b.

**325** MA At., No. 29 (5th cent.): Tzouvara-Souli, 1979, 56, εικ. 29α–β.

**326** MA Io. No. 1371 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 193 and 366, F79.

**327** A half-relief in a volute krater, MA At. No. 63 (half of the 5th cent): Dieterle, 2007, 215 and 373, F330.

**328** MA At. No. 69 (5th cent. or later): Dieterle, 2007, 192 and 367, F118. Also, another dove, on a hand (partially preserved), about to fly; no dating, MA At. No. 70: Dieterle, 2007, 192–193 and 368, F126.

**329** MA Io. No. 631 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 370, F238.

**330** MA Io. No. 3552 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F120.

As in previous centuries, the importance of dedications related to war remains. Among these finds are a shield<sup>331</sup>, greaves,<sup>332</sup> helmets,<sup>333</sup> and cheeks, some of them decorated.<sup>334</sup> Fibulae<sup>335</sup> and mirrors<sup>336</sup> are the main types of jewellery found, as well as a plaque, probably once attached to mirror, with Herakles depicted.<sup>337</sup> Of lower artistic quality, but still of great importance are the bronze vases, some of them with inscriptions. On a 4th-century kylix we can read ΠΑΝΑΙΤΙΟΣ: ΦΑΡΣΑΛΙΟΣ ΔΙΙ / ΝΑΙΩΙ: ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕ (“Panaitios, a Pharsalian, dedicated (this) to Zeus Naios”).<sup>338</sup> Some of the attachments for these vases are still preserved, for instance a satyr,<sup>339</sup> and, in less elaborate cases, normal handles<sup>340</sup>. Some bronze masks, originally attached to vases of Athenian provenance, are also dated to the 4th century.<sup>341</sup>

Last, but not least, archaeologists have discovered a few votive plaques with dedicatory inscriptions, some of them with Zeus Naios as recipient. One was dedicated by a collective, the center of Paleis, in the island of Cephalonia, facing the Epirotan coast.<sup>342</sup> The second was dedicated by the Athenians after a victory over Peloponnesians.<sup>343</sup> The script seems to be from the 5th century and Parke has suggested that it could have been dedicated after the battle of Phormio in 429.<sup>344</sup> The third plaque contains the following hexameter: Σώταιρος Κύπριος σοφίας μέτρον, ὄργανα χειρ[ῶν] / [χειρ[ός]] (“Sotairos, a Kypriot, example of wisdom, with his hands (made/played)

**331** MA At. No. 83 (5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 224 and 375, F434.

**332** MA At. No. 1412 (5th cent, found in stoa E2, in the area of the *bouleuterion*): Vokotopoulou, 1973, 57. It bears a dedicatory: Μ. Γάνγκριος Ἀδριαῖος ἀνέθηκε Διὶ Ναίῳι (“M. Gangrius Adriaaios dedicated (this) to Zeus Naios”). With an Illyrian name, the trianomina could mean that Gangrius had been romanized (Piccinini, 2012, 219–220).

**333** SEG XXXVII, 514 is a bronze helmet with the inscription ΟΛΥΜΠΙ. It is likely to be an offering for Olympian Zeus. MA At. No. 138 (5th cent.?): Dieterle, 2007, 376, F457; a Pylos style helmet.

**334** MA At. No. 161 (5th-4th cents., with bear): Dieterle, 2007, 376, F460. MA At. No. 162 (5th-4th cents., with mustache): Dieterle, 2007, 376, F461. MA At. No. 163 (5th-4th cents., with bear): Dieterle, 2007, 376, F462.

**335** MA Io. No. 3187 (5th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 381, F656. Uncertain dating in the other cases: MA Io. No. 1471 and 2658: Dieterle, 2007, 381, F658. MA Io. No. 121: Dieterle, 2007, 381, F655. MA Io. No. 899: Dieterle, 2007, 381, F659. MA Io. No. 420a: Dieterle, 2007, 381, F657. MA Io. No. 963, 821 and 985: Dieterle, 2007, 381, F659.

**336** Ortiz private collection (ca. 470): Dieterle, 2007, 229 and 369, F167.

**337** MA Io. No. 761 (mid 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 206 and 373, F343.

**338** MA Io., No. 160 (beginning of 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 372, F319.

**339** MA At. No. 78 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 371, F258.

**340** MA At. No. 354 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 369, F172.

**341** MA At. No. 19, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, and 472 (4th cent.); cf. Piccinini, 2017, 137–138.

**342** MA At. No. 1247 (5th cent. although perhaps later, 4th-3rd cents.): Dieterle, 2007, 380, F600. Παλεῖς Διὶ Ναίῳι (“The Paleis to Zeus Naios”).

**343** MA At. No. 448 (ca. 429?): Dieterle, 2007, 380, F598–599. Ἀθηναῖοι ἀπὸ Πελοποννησίων · ναυμαχίαι νικέσαντες ἀνέθεσαν (“The Athenians dedicated (this) after defeating the Peloponnesians in a naval battle.”)

**344** Parke, 1967, 136.

instruments”).<sup>345</sup> Another piece of a similar date was offered by an Athenian: Δὺ Ναίῳ / Φιλίῳς Ἀθηναῖος (“To Zeus Naios, Philinos, an Athenian”).<sup>346</sup> The plaque dedicated by the Zakynthian, Agathon, son of Echephylos, descended from *proxenoi* of the Molossians and their allies for thirty generations, is of great political importance.<sup>347</sup>

Many of the objects described above are typologically similar to those of the Archaic period, but, in some the dedication (or preservation) of certain types of objects, especially tripods, greatly reduced. Only one tripod dates to this period. This may suggest a change in the symbolic importance of certain motifs. It may point to a change in the way the oracle was consulted, with tripods relegated to a secondary role, as I will later explain. The apparent decrease or absence of figurines of domesticated animals might be explained in a similar manner. On the other hand, it is clear that oracular activity was heavily practiced during this time period, since most of the lead tablets we have are dated to the 5th and 4th centuries and only a few seem to be from Hellenistic times. This is surprising *a priori* because from the end of the 4th century until the Roman conquest of Epirus in 167 the sanctuary of Dodona was radically transformed both in cult and its civic buildings. For a better understanding of this process, we need to pay attention to the historical context.

## 2.6 Numismatics, Molossia, and Dodona

There are different ways of approaching coinage in an archaeological site. We can consider the types of pieces found there, the coins minted there, and the depiction of iconography linked to the site in the coinage of the region at wide. The first group attests to the circulation of goods and people. Although they do not necessarily reflect the visitor's place of origin, these coins demonstrate the breadth of the center's network.<sup>348</sup> This book, however, will focus on the other two aspects of coinage, since they are especially useful for understanding the role of Dodona not just as a powerful center with the right to mint its own currency, but also as an iconically important repository of self-representative and identitary symbols for Molossians and Epirotes. Studies concerning Epirote numismatics, although not overly abundant, are comprehensive enough to build sound arguments concerning this phenomenon.<sup>349</sup>

<sup>345</sup> MHA Wien (without serial number; 4th cent.): Dieterle, 380, F601.

<sup>346</sup> MA At. No. 452 (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 372, F304 (cataloged as plaque from a tripod).

<sup>347</sup> MA At. No. 803 [ca. 330? (conventional) / 295–290 (Meyer)]: Dieterle, 380, F604; Meyer, 2013, 73.

<sup>348</sup> For example, the international affairs during the Hellenistic period, as we will see, entailed a more variety of coins found in the sanctuary (Meyer, 2013, 103, n. 288).

<sup>349</sup> The main work was presented by Franke (1961). Although published half century ago, many of its theories still prevail. Good summaries are Gjongecaj (2011) and Papaevangelou-Genakos (2013). Focused on the Epirote *Koinon* is the dissertation of Diez (1988–1989).

The earliest Molossian coins are from two silver series dated to the beginning of the 4th century and struck on the Attic-Euboic weight standard.<sup>350</sup> This, too, evinces the influence of contacts between Molossia and Athens since at least the reign of Tharyps. A total of three pieces are preserved from these series. Two of them are hemidrachms with a standing Molossian dog on the obverse, and a thunderbolt in the reverse between the legend ΜΟΛΟΣ (above) – ΝΩΣ (below). The third exemplar is an obol with a seated Molossian dog and a thunderbolt between letters Μ (left) – Ο (right), the acronym of the ethnic.<sup>351</sup> The depiction of the animal surely stems from the excellence of Molossian hounds, as some ancient authors attest.<sup>352</sup> Presumably shepherding, one of the main economic activities in Epirus, also influenced the decision to depict this symbol. Needless to say, the thunderbolt is a clear reference to the tutelary god of the shrine, Zeus. We have already seen the importance of Zeus Keranios figurines, which render the god with his most famous weapon.

The discovery of two casts in the *bouleuterion* offers absolute confirmation that the sanctuary had its own mint.<sup>353</sup> They correspond to the bronze issues minted by the Molossians in the early 4th century. The first one was employed to produce pieces with the dog types on the obverse and the Molossian ethnic-monogram ΜΟ nestled in an oak wreath in the reverse. In the case of the oak wreath, the leaves are an obvious allusion to the sacred tree of the shrine. The fact that they appear as a wreath is not as readily analyzable. As we will see later, Dodona held the agonistic competition of the Naia, whose definitive testimony dates to the 3rd century and the prize of which might have been an oak wreath. It is possible, however, that the games existed in earlier times. If the dating of the die is correct, this minted series would be proof of that the games existed already in the 4th century. The second cast bears the figures of an ethnic-monogram Μ in a laurel crown in the front and a thunderbolt in the back.<sup>354</sup>

The catalogue of Molossian coins also includes two more issues in bronze. One is dated on the first half of the 4th century and depicts the head of Athena in the obverse and a standing eagle over a thunderbolt in the reverse, as well as the legend ΜΟΛΟΣΣΩΝ on the right. The second issue dates to 360 – 330, with the type of a circular Molossian shield with a thunderbolt device on the obverse, and a thunderbolt in a laurel crown on the reverse.<sup>355</sup> Just as with the thunderbolt, the eagle is likely related to Zeus.

The above mentioned are the series minted in Epirus. There are, however, more examples produced during the reign of Alexander I, apparently in the West, during his campaign. Zeus and his thunderbolt appear in silver staters; the frontal face of

<sup>350</sup> Franke, 1961, 88, Gr. I-II.

<sup>351</sup> Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 132.

<sup>352</sup> Aristotle, *HA* 9, 608a, 27–33; Solinus, 13, 6–7.

<sup>353</sup> Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 132.

<sup>354</sup> Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 132.

<sup>355</sup> Franke, 1961, 99–106, Gr. III-IV; Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 132.

Helios and a star appear on gold and silver obols. The bronze issues have a similar repertoire to that of their Molossian counterparts cited above. First, the Molossian shield on the obverse and a thunderbolt in a laurel wreath on the back; second, an eagle with a tripod and a laurel leaf in the field on the front, and a thunderbolt nestled in laurel wreath on the reverse; third, Helios on the head and a thunderbolt on the back. The alternative inscriptions ΑΛΕΞ ΤΟΥ ΝΕΟΠ and ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ assure the identification of Alexander I.<sup>356</sup> These images are testament to the importance of Zeus, here together with Helios. Whether these specific cases refer to Dodona is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, since most of them follow Molossian patterns I am inclined to think that they do. In the case of the tripod, Franke points out that some bronze coins from Kroton bear the same type.<sup>357</sup> In a later time, after 148 BCE, Ambrakia also had a tripod in one of their coins.<sup>358</sup> Tripods have strong ties to Delphian Apollo. However, since tripods seem to have played an important role in oracular consultation at Dodona, as we will see, Liampi does not discard the possibility that they chose the symbol for that reason, even in the case of Kroton due to an alliance held between the Molossian kingdom and the city that has yet to be confirmed.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Franke, 1961, 89–91; Liampi, 2013, 24–25; Papaenvangelou-Genakos, 2013, 134–135.

<sup>357</sup> Franke, 1961, 90, n. 38.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibidem*, 324; Dieterle, 2007, 178, n. 660.

<sup>359</sup> Liampi, 2013, 24–25.



## 3 Time to change? – The Hellenistic period

### 3.1 Conventional vs. new theories – Was there an Epirote Alliance since 330, not at all, or even earlier?

As Plutarch states, the king celebrated a sacrifice to Zeus Areios in the Molossian center of Passaron and exchanged oaths with the Epirotes. In this ceremony the king swore to rule according to the laws and the people swore to maintain the kingdom as the laws established.<sup>1</sup> In short, the power of the Molossian kings was not absolute. Thanks to epigraphy we have the basic outlines of Molossia's political organization. The popular assembly (*ekklesia*) voted resolutions concerning the concession of citizenship (*politeia*), *proxenia*, exemption of taxes (*ateleia*) and other privileges.<sup>2</sup> As we have seen there were magistrates, the *damiorgoi*, as well as colleges of officials, the *hieromnamones*, and the *synarchontes*.<sup>3</sup> Each individual acted on behalf of their *ethne*. Many of these inscriptions were found in Dodona, the place where these events took place and other important documents, such as manumissions, were deposited.

Up to this point, we have dealt with epigraphs concerning Molossian political organization. Still, evidence suggests that at the end of 330's there was a major change in Epirus with the emergence of a *symmachia*, the Alliance.<sup>4</sup> This alliance is supposed to have existed from ca. 330 to 232,<sup>5</sup> when the last Molossian monarch, the queen Deidameia, died leaving no heir.<sup>6</sup> According to Cabanes, there might have been a second-tier government under the sovereign. If this is right, perhaps this *symmachia* was almost a federal state integrated by several *ethne* and ruled by a king.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, the absence of monarchy led to the emergence of the Epirote *Koinon*, which was dissolved in 167 at the hands of Rome.

Two recent works encounter this theory and develop new interpretations. In 2013 Meyer revised and redated most of the material evidence that was previously used to support the Alliance theory.<sup>8</sup> Meyer concludes that there was no such union of Epirote *ethne* and rejects the idea of a Molossian *koinon* in the 4th century. In 2018 Pascual, in a book edited by Domínguez, has presented a different hypothesis, which pro-

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1 Plut., *Pyrrh.* 5, 5.

2 Cabanes, 1997a, 81–82.

3 Three examples are *SEG* XV, 384, C2 and C3.

4 The main works, which differ when in their explanations of how the Alliance functioned and the specifics of the federal union, are Cross (1932), Hammond (1967; 1994), Cabanes (1976), Larsen (1968) Franke (1989), Funke (2000b, supporting a stronger federalism), and Davies (2000). For a good summary of these theories, see Piccinini, 2015a, 229–231.

5 Hammond, 1967, 564.

6 Polyaeus., *Strat.* 8, 52; Iust., *Ep.* 28, 3, 5 (Laodameia, instead of Deidameia).

7 Cabanes, 1976; Funke, 2000b, 109; Piccinini, 2015a, 229–331.

8 Meyer, 2013; 2015.

poses the existence of an Epirote union, ruled by the Molossian kings, already in the first half of the 4th century. Since these hypotheses confer a different role to the sanctuary of Dodona depending on their interpretation of the sources, I will devote the following pages to examining this question.

The existence of an Alliance is based on an assortment of sources, primarily epigraphic and literary, but also numismatic. A list of *theorodokoi* from Argos offers the names of subjects acting on behalf of their respective regions.<sup>9</sup> Lines 10–14 read as follows: [Ἀμβρ]α[κία] · [Φ]ορβάδας / [Ἄπε]ιρος · Κλεοπάτρα / [Φοιν]ίκα · Σατυρίνος, Πυλάδας Κάρχαξ / [Κόρκ]υρα · [Μνασαλκ]ίδας, Αἰσχρίων Τευθράντος / [Ἀπο]λ[λ]ωνία · Δω[.]θεος. In northwestern Greece Epirus, not Molossia, was represented by Cleopatra. The document is dated to 330 and it makes sense to identify her as the widow of Alexander I.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it coincides with *SEG* IX, 2, the receipt of grain from Cyrene by Olympias and Cleopatra. It is also worth pointing out that the *theorodokoi* list from Epidaurus, dated to ca. 360, distinguished between Thesprotians, Molossians, and Chaonians. Thirty years later Epirus encompassed these three regions and their *ethne*. This has led some scholars to assume that the Molossian kings controlled almost all Epirus to a certain extent.<sup>11</sup>

Another piece of evidence in support of the Alliance comes from Stephanus of Byzantium, who explains that Aristotle wrote a work entitled *The Politeia of the Epirotes* (ἐν τῇ τῶν Ἑπειρωτῶν πολιτείᾳ) in 326/325.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, a series of coins with the inscription ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ are thought to have been minted in this period.<sup>13</sup> The dedicatory inscription of Agathon, son of Echephylos, already mentioned also seems to point to a *symmachia*, since it asserts that the Zakynthian was *proxenos* of the Molossians and their allies (“Μολοσσῶν καὶ συμμάχων”). It is partly on account of this reference that the document is dated to 334–331.<sup>14</sup> Last of all, a manumission registered in *SGDI* 1351 lists seven witnesses from the Molossian *ethnos* and seven more from the Thesprotian. Since there is no reference to any king or magistrate, its chronology is difficult to ascertain. Cabanes suggests 330–328, since it coincides with the above mentioned documents, which may show the emergence of the Alliance.<sup>15</sup>

After the death of Alexander I and the regency of Cleopatra and Olympias, Aecides (?–317/316), son of Arybas, became king in the stead of Neoptolemus, son of Alexander I. Arybas had an older son, Alketas, who was exiled due to his aggressive temperament.<sup>16</sup> The new sovereign married Phtia, daughter of Menon of Pharsalus,

<sup>9</sup> *SEG* XXIII, 189.

<sup>10</sup> Charneux, 1966, 178–179.

<sup>11</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 118; 1981, 25; 1999, 376; Davies, 2000, 257.

<sup>12</sup> Steph. Byz. fr. 494 (Rose). Cabanes, 1976, 172.

<sup>13</sup> Franke 1961, 116; Hammond, 1967, 537 and 560.

<sup>14</sup> Hammond, 1967, 534; Davies, 2000, 249.

<sup>15</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 177–179; 1981, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Diod. Sic., 19, 88, 1; Paus. 1, 11, 5.

and had three children, Deidameia, Troa, and Pyrrhus.<sup>17</sup> He was dethroned by his fellow countrymen because of his continuous wars against Macedonia, which was involved in succession strife after the death of Alexander the Great.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the work of Aristotle on the government of Epirus, this is the first reference conserved about the “Epirotes” as a unified entity. Diodorus, whose main source was Hieronymus of Cardia, lived in the 1st century BCE. Hammond, who considered the Sicilian author to be reliable, interpreted this fragment as a proof of the capacity of the Epirote population at large to overthrowing Aeacides in the context of war.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Funke perceived in this the activity of a federal state composed of small *koina* with a common assembly.<sup>20</sup> With regard to this interpretation of Diodorus, we should note that Justin, in his discussion of Alexander I, mentions him as the king of Epirus.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Plutarch refers to the Molossians, not to the Epirotes.<sup>22</sup> Hammond’s confidence in Diodorus notwithstanding, it is unclear which of these authors is employing the term inaccurately.

It is difficult to determine how the situation developed in the following years. Larsen states that there was a short period without *basileia*, in which the figure of the monarch was replaced by an annually elected *strategos* or, more likely, a board of three, one of whom was the commander-in-chief.<sup>23</sup> However, this hypothesis is based on inscriptions of uncertain chronology and perhaps of later date. No ancient work mentions a period without a monarch. Plutarch gives a different account in which the Molossians brought to power two descendants of Neoptolemus (“...τοὺς Νεοπτολέμου παῖδας”).<sup>24</sup> The reference is doubtful, since there is no other report of more offsprings from this king, besides Alexander I, Olympias, and Troa. Since the widow of Philip II was executed by Cassander in 316 and the other two were already dead,<sup>25</sup> the story appears to be unreliable. Lévêque, however, suggests that Neoptolemus I might have had more sons not registered in the sources,<sup>26</sup> but this is difficult to believe. The same conclusion must apply for Beloch’s theory, which claimed that it was actually the offspring of Neoptolemus II, not Neoptolemus I.<sup>27</sup> A third account, from Diodorus, appears more probable. Instead of “the descendants of Neoptolemus”, Cassander would have allied with Epirus and his general, Lykiskos, would

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17 Plut., *Pyrrh.* 1, 6–7.

18 Diod.Sic., 19, 36, 4 (“οἱ δὲ χωρισθέντες τῶν Ἡπειρωτῶν (...) κοινῷ δόγματι...”); Plut., *Pyrrh.* 2, 1; Iust., *Ep.* 17, 3, 16–17.

19 Hammond, 1967, 559–562.

20 Funke, 2000a, 193.

21 Iust., *Ep.* 17, 3, 15: “...qui post eum regnum Epiri tenuit...”

22 Plut., *Pyrrh.* 2, 1: “ἐπεὶ δὲ στασιάσαντες οἱ Μολοισσοὶ...”

23 Larsen, 1968, 279.

24 Plut., *Pyrrh.* 2, 1.

25 Herbert Bunbury, 2007, 23.

26 Lévêque, 1957, 98–100.

27 Beloch, 1927, 144–145.

have been regent.<sup>28</sup> Hammond agrees, arguing that Neoptolemus was still too young and could not yet rule.<sup>29</sup>

A few years later, in 313/312, the Molossians asked Aeacides to return, but he died soon after in a battle against Philip, the relative of Cassander.<sup>30</sup> Alketas II, the older brother condemned to exile due to his aggressive behavior, ascended to the throne. Perhaps this was the reason why in 307 Molossian citizens rose against the monarchy, killing both the king and his children.<sup>31</sup> During his reign Alketas II participated in some battles and sustained the conflicts with Cassander, who lately became an ally.<sup>32</sup>

Pyrrhus, son of Aeacides, became the new king (307–302 and 297–272). With regard to his rule a lot of information, not only about his politics and foreign affairs, but also concerning his character and behavior survives in a few authors, mainly Plutarch. During his childhood, the son of Aeacides was taken far from Epirus to keep him safe from those who had dethroned his father.<sup>33</sup> After Alketas II was assassinated, Pyrrhus came back, although he was only twelve.<sup>34</sup> Five years later, he was again forced to go into exile, perhaps because of pressure from Cassander, and went to Egypt.<sup>35</sup> Another account details that he was exiled due to a Molossian revolt while he attended a wedding in Illyria.<sup>36</sup> His substitute was Neoptolemus II, son of Alexander I, whose excessively tough reign led Pyrrhus to return in 297. They agreed to share the throne to avoid more struggles.<sup>37</sup> The younger monarch, however, killed Neoptolemus II during a feast and began to rule alone.<sup>38</sup>

Before focusing on Pyrrhus, let us dwell on the kingship of Neoptolemus II for a short while. His reign, although brief, is important due to the epigraphic evidence that mentions him: *SGDI* 1336. This decree, found in Dodona, bears the exemption of taxes (*ateleia*) to Kleomachos, an Atintan, during the reign of this king (“βασιλέος Νεοπτολέμου Ἀλεξάνδρου”).<sup>39</sup> The text explains that Kleomachos received this privilege from “οἱ σύμμαχοι τῶν Ἀπειρωτῶν”, an ambiguous expression that can be

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<sup>28</sup> Diod.Sic., 19, 36, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Hammond, 1967, 567.

<sup>30</sup> Diod.Sic., 19, 74, 5; Paus., 1, 11, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Paus., 1, 11, 5. Mason, 2007, 98.

<sup>32</sup> Diod.Sic., 19, 88, 2–6 and 89, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 2, 1–2.

<sup>34</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 3, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Paus., 1, 11, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 4, 1–2.

<sup>37</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.*, 5, 2–3.

<sup>38</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.*, 5, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Its chronology is thus 302–297. *SGDI* considers also the possibility of 317–312, based on Beloch's assumption of the Plutarch's reference to “the descendants of Neoptolemus”, refer to Neoptolemus II himself (1927, 144–145). I do not support this hypothesis.

translated as “the allies of the Epirotes”,<sup>40</sup> or “those of the Epirotes who are allied”.<sup>41</sup> In my opinion, the latter is probably more accurate, since it shows that there is a stronger connection among the allies.

The epigraphic, literary and numismatic sources examined in these pages are at the foundation of the theory that an Alliance emerged ca. 330 and continued over the next decades. While the hypothesis is an interesting one, we must point out several lacunae and some of the weaker arguments. Meyer and Pascual deal with this in their new works and propose two different interpretations.

In the list of *theorodokoi* from Argos, in which Cleopatra appears on behalf of Epirus, Meyer suggests we understand “Epirus” not as a political entity, but as a geographical one. Moreover, we should take into account that this list might not enumerate all the states that existed at the time.<sup>42</sup> With regard to the work of Aristotle on the *Politeia of the Epirotes*, this would not be the first time that the author wrote an essay on a region that was not a federal entity, such as he did with Crete.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, the dating of the coinage series with ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ is based on the traditional theory of the Alliance itself.<sup>44</sup> They could in fact date to a different period, perhaps earlier if we connect them to a similar coin found in Cassope, which was found in a layer with other objects dated to 342.<sup>45</sup> In any case, according to Meyer the inscription ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ does not itself imply that there was already a federal state, but merely that Molossians considered themselves Epirotes.<sup>46</sup>

Another argument employed by Meyer is a redating of IG IX<sup>2</sup> 1, 4, 1750, the dedicatory inscription of Agathon, son of Echephylos, whose family had been *proxenos* of the Molossians and their allies for thirty generations. Scholars dated it to 330 because it matches the theory of the Alliance.<sup>47</sup> Meyer, on the contrary, focuses on the number of generations and, following Eratosthenes from Cyrene, concludes that it would be better to place it at the beginning of the 3rd century, which coincides with the conquest of Kerkyra – and probably Lefkada – by Pyrrhus in 295. An offering by a *proxenos* from this place would make more sense at this time.<sup>48</sup> Even if the dating of 330 is not reliable, Meyer’s own explanation is not free from fault. First, the reckoning of generations linked to the fall of Troy, is rather risky. Second, even if we accept to connect the dedication to the conquest of Kerkyra by Pyrrhus, the fact that

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<sup>40</sup> Davies, 2000, 250; Meyer, 2013, 68. This interpretation implies that there is a group of Epirotes allied, not all of them, and only in some respects. In short, not a complete alliance.

<sup>41</sup> Franke, 1955, 35–36; Hammond, 1967, 559–560; Larsen, 1968, 177; Will, 1977, 190–191; Cabanes, 1981, 29; 2004, 38–39; 2005, 150. This alternative translation considers the existence of an alliance among Epirotes as a State.

<sup>42</sup> Meyer, 2013, 64–65.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, 67.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 67, previously suggested by Davies, 2000, 244.

<sup>45</sup> Raynor, 2019, 321–326. The coin: Dakaris *et al.*, 1999, 153, n. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Meyer, 2013, 77.

<sup>47</sup> Fraser, 2003, 26–27.

<sup>48</sup> Meyer, 2013, 73, n. 202.

Agathon and his family were *proxenoi* long before – we should refrain from ascertaining the starting point – implies a strong bond with Molossians at an earlier date. That is, Agathon would not need to make this offering only right after his territory was annexed.

SGDI 1351 records a manumission witnessed by seven people from the Molossian *ethnos* and seven more from the Thesprotian. Cabanes sees this as clear evidence of political unity and, again, dates it to 330/328 more for the sake of convenience than for epigraphic reasons.<sup>49</sup> Meyer, on the other hand, does not consider that the naming of both *ethne* implies that they were part of the same entity. Instead, she takes it to mean that Dodona, where the inscription was found and the manumission took place, was common to all of them. This, however, does not explain why both Molossians and Thesprotians acted as witnesses in equal numbers, seven and seven. Five slaves were freed on this occasion. One may surmise that some belonged to one *ethnos* and some to the other, but why was the procedure at the same time if they had different jurisdictions? Nevertheless, there is no way to know this for certain, and we should keep in mind that Franke saw similarities between this inscription and SGDI 1336,<sup>50</sup> which refers to “οἱ σύμμαχοι τῶν Ἀπειρωτᾶν.” Meyer argues that the collocation points to a soft alliance that could grant privileges, such as *ateleia* and *enteleia*, but was not strong enough to imply full political unity.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, concerning the reference of Diodorus to the dethronement of Aeacides in 317 by the Epirotes,<sup>52</sup> Meyer highlights that Plutarch writes more accurately about the Molossians,<sup>53</sup> considering the formula κοινῶ δόγματι – “with common agreement” – of Polybius ought not mean ‘a decision of a *koinon*’, which would be better rendered as τὸ δόγμα τοῦ κοινοῦ.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the Alliance was not a fully federalized state integrated by the citizens of all the *ethne* and capable of overthrowing the Molossian king. In short, I think Plutarch’s account is more accurate and better ties into with the theory of the *symmachia*, a time when the federal unification was not yet complete.

Meyer’s hypothesis rejects the idea of an Alliance ca. 330. According to this model, nothing relevant took place in this period. Her appraisal is based on her opinion that the dating of some of the epigraphic evidence is wrong and a misinterpretation of the literary and numismatic evidence. For example, she argues that the use of the term “Epirotes” on coins during this period does not imply a real common Epirote identity or political unity. The work of Ganter on Boiotia similarly states that Thebes may have employed the concept of “Boiotian” to ease the development of a

<sup>49</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 177–179; 1981, 27.

<sup>50</sup> Franke, 1961, 302, n. 21.

<sup>51</sup> Meyer, 2013, 68–69 and 74.

<sup>52</sup> Diod.Sic. 19, 36, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 2, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Meyer, 2013, 70–72.

common identity and not as a consequence of it.<sup>55</sup> Meyer's arguments, however, also lack definitive supporting evidence.<sup>56</sup> While it is true that some documents are dated to ca. 330 in accordance with the conventional opinion, her novel theory of the history of Molossia forces us to change too many elements from various different sources for what still remains a tenuous argument. Furthermore, it might be surprising that the *Koinon* emerged simply as a consequence of the fall of the Molossian monarchy. Meyer's proposal essentially holds that the absence of a dynasty ruling one of the *ethne* would have led the others to join together, however slight that union was. It may be more plausible to propose an intermediary step, the Alliance, which brought about the first network of collaboration. That is, perhaps total unification did not happen until 232 precisely because of attempts by the Molossian sovereigns to rule over the other *ethne* but their pre-eminence in the *symmachia* was concrete. Once the monarchy was dissolved, it would have been easier to set up a federal state with more equal terms for each *ethnos* based on a pre-existing framework.

Pascual's 2018 contribution makes things even more convoluted. We can find the seeds of this new theory in a 2014 paper by Domínguez, a member of the same research group<sup>57</sup> who suggests that the federal state already existed in the reign of Alexander I, before 330. He argues that the king would not have participated in a war in Italy if he had not had a solid hold on Epirus.<sup>58</sup> I think this explanation is inconclusive. A good relationship between the Molossians and their neighbors might have been enough to allow Alexander I to proceed with his expedition. Moreover, Domínguez states that Philip II's campaign against Persia, continued and extended by his son Alexander III, could have been orchestrated with the Molossian – or Epirote – campaign.<sup>59</sup> If true, Alexander I would have been pressed by his relatives to act and the seek help from Tarantos would justify war in a region that was actually not so distant, since the oracle of Dodona was sometimes visited by people from the West inhabitants.<sup>60</sup>

To better understand Pascual it is necessary revisit older events. Whereas the conventional theory held that the death of Alexander I triggered the unification of

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55 Ganter, 2013, 101. Nevertheless, as Raynor points out, coins were minted by bodies such as the state or the king. Therefore, if we see issues with that legend, there was an entity strong enough to produce a fiduciary coinage (2017, 254).

56 Raynor also rejects the new theory, arguing that although it is wrong to assume that the lists of *theorodokoi* always refer to political entities, it is also less likely that the Epirote cases are the only "exceptions" to the common trend (2017, 247–252).

57 Within the project "Ethnogenesis, Settlement, Territory and Federalism in Ancient Epirus" (HAR2014–53885).

58 Domínguez, 2014, 211–212 and 235. According to Hammond, the death of Alexander I was the *terminus post quem* for the formation of the Alliance, since such a big change would have not occurred in the last few years of his reign (1967, 537).

59 Domínguez, 2014, 235.

60 For example, *LOD* 5.



Epirus,<sup>61</sup> Pascual examines sources that might support unification at an earlier date. Not just in the time of Alexander I, as a sort of requirement for conducting his campaign in Italy,<sup>62</sup> but even before. Xenophon states that Alketas (390?-370?) helped the Athenians cross from Epirus to Kerkyra.<sup>63</sup> This may mean that Alketas controlled the shores. Xenophon also calls the king *hyparchos* of Epirus and subject of Jason of Pherae.<sup>64</sup> This term, assuming that the ancient writer employed it consciously, may imply that Alketas was the military chief of Epirus and was subordinate to Jason of Pherae.<sup>65</sup> Alketas was then exiled to Syracuse, but recovered the throne with the aid of Dionysius I and the Illyrians. According to Diodorus, the Molossian's northern neighbors decided to loot the territory and killed 15,000 inhabitants. The Epirotes and Spartans later came to the aid of the Molossians and restored peace.<sup>66</sup> Pascual suspects that such a large number of people may refer to the whole Epirus and that Spartan aid was not just for the Molossians, but for all the other *ethne*.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, there is no doubt that there was a Molossian *koinon*, as some inscriptions attest. Pascual thus proposes an Epirote kingdom, divided into the main *ethne*, perhaps also organized into *koina*. Each *koinon* would have had its own *politeia* and belonged to the Epirote kingdom.<sup>68</sup>

Pascual's hypothesis has many merits. In fact, the above-mentioned finding in Cassope of a coin dating to 342 and bearing the inscription of ΑΙΙΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ<sup>69</sup> is better explained by his model.<sup>70</sup> The main weakness of argument lies on its reliance on a very specific interpretation of Xenophon and Diodorus. We cannot be sure that they employed the terminology with conscious rigor and this is not the only way of interpreting the evidence. In other words, although the reconstruction proposed is suggestive, it is not entirely convincing. I support the conventional account but remain aware that the arguments must be made more solid. I am convinced that future findings in archaeology, epigraphy, and numismatics will contribute to this complex debate.

A consequence of Meyer's interpretation is the attribution of a new role to Dodona, based on the inscriptions found at the site which list three boards of officials: the *damiorgoi*,<sup>71</sup> the *hieromnamones*,<sup>72</sup> and the *synarchontes*.<sup>73</sup> All of them may show the

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<sup>61</sup> Hammond, 1967, 537.

<sup>62</sup> Pascual, 2018, 64.

<sup>63</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 6, 2, 9–11.

<sup>64</sup> Xen. *Hell.* 6, 1, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Pascual, 2018, 66–69.

<sup>66</sup> Diod.Sic., 15, 13, 1–3.

<sup>67</sup> Pascual, 2018, 69–70.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, 73–81.

<sup>69</sup> Dakaris *et al.*, 1999, 153, n. 20.

<sup>70</sup> Raynor sees this as the evidence of the existence of such political entity at least already in the 340s (2019, 321–326).

<sup>71</sup> SEG XV, 384.

<sup>72</sup> C3.



evolution of the same magistracy.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, Meyer suggests that the sanctuary might have been the center of a regional amphictyony and that these offices were not part of the Molossian kingdom or a *koinon*, but of the amphictyony.<sup>75</sup> I will return to this hypothesis when I treat the political dimensions of the sanctuary.

It is important to mention two more inscriptions from Dodona. Both of them are oracular consultations made by “τοὶ διατοί”. The first one of these plaques appeared during the excavations led by Evangelidis and contains a text on how to fairly spend money in the *prytaneion*.<sup>76</sup> There is no common opinion about the term among scholars. Hammond reads τοὶ διατοί as an *ethnos*;<sup>77</sup> for Cabanes, one of the Epirote *koina*.<sup>78</sup> Gartziou-Tatti is more inclined to see them as a political or religious magistracy.<sup>79</sup> I agree with Eidinow and Lhôte, who understand the term as meaning “arbitrators.”<sup>80</sup> This definition is in accordance with some recently published consultations, in which the *diaitōi* deal with judicial decisions.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, Hesychius glosses the term διατός as κριτής.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.2 The Aeacid dynasty in the 3rd century – from Pyrrhus I to 232 BCE

The 3rd century was a tumultuous period throughout the entire Hellenistic world. The first decades were marked by Pyrrhus’ expansion into Epirus. After annexing Ambrakia, he made it the seat of his kingdom<sup>83</sup> and gained temporary sovereignty over Macedonia in 288. He unified the majority of Epirus, including Chaonia,<sup>84</sup> pushed the national borders into Illyria,<sup>85</sup> and, most famously, led his army in Magna Graecia and Sicily against the Romans in the eponymous, and ultimately failed, Pyrrhic War (280–275). Soon after, he returned to mainland Greece, only to meet an inglorious end in a battle in Argos while attempting to wrest power from Antigonous. It is said that the mother of a soldier, watching her son struggle with Pyr-

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73 C2.

74 Meyer, 2013, 88.

75 *Ibidem*, 60 and 87; 2015, 300–305.

76 C20 (No. 35).

77 Hammond, 1967, 487 and 537.

78 Cabanes, 1976, 153.

79 Gartziou-Tatti, 2018, 145.

80 Lhôte, 2006, 66–72; Eidinow, 2007, 347–348. Gartziou-Tatti does not completely discard this possibility (2018, 145).

81 DVC 548B, 2284B. Perhaps also DVC 1015 A (cf. Gartziou-Tatti, 2018, 143).

82 See DGE (no specific reference from Hesychios cited).

83 Str., 7, 7, 6.

84 Cabanes, 2011, 84–86.

85 Plin., *HN* 3, 101; Frontin., *Str.* 3, 6, 3; Iust., *Ep.* 25, 5, 5; App., *Ill.* 7.

rrhus in the street, threw a tile that struck the monarch in the head, fatally incapacitating him.<sup>86</sup>

Some ancient authors, including Polybius, Pliny the Elder and Justin, call Pyrrhus king of Epirus.<sup>87</sup> It is unclear if Plutarch does so too. In the beginning of his *Pyrrhus*, he claims that Aeacides is dethroned by the Molossians<sup>88</sup> and calls Pyrrhus, who then accedes to the throne, by the demonym Epirotes.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, Plutarch never calls him “Pyrrhus, king of Epirus”. Diodorus, on the other hand, uses the appellation “Molossian Pyrrhus”, quoting a Gaulish shield dedicated by the king.<sup>90</sup> Meyer argues that the occurrence of “Pyrrhus of Epirus” could just be a conventional formula. According to her, a change took place in this period driven not wholly by politics, but also questions of identity. According to her, a sense of belonging to both Molossia and Epirus would have been tangible,<sup>91</sup> even beyond, for example, the practice of minting of coins with the legend ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ. This double identity, however, is based on the absence of the Alliance and, in my opinion, would have existed in earlier times, as recently Raynor argues.<sup>92</sup> The *symmachia*, as a precursor for a *koinon*, would not have signified a strong union of the *ethne*. This may be the reason why we see some offerings with the formula Πύρρο[ς καὶ] / Ἀπειρ[ῶ]ται.<sup>93</sup> The distinction inherent in the use of two names suggests that the king was the leader of the Alliance, but could not act on behalf of everyone.

After the death of Pyrrhus, his son Alexander II (272–252?/247?) rose to the throne, since his older brother Ptolemy, the heir apparent, had fallen in battle at Sparta.<sup>94</sup> Ptolemy had a son, Pyrrhus, only three years old at the time of his accession. When Alexander became king he adopted Pyrrhus as his son.<sup>95</sup> His long reign was marked by relative peace and stability, with only a few noteworthy conflicts with Macedonia<sup>96</sup> and the Illyrians of Myrtilos.<sup>97</sup>

The subsequent years, up to the death of Deidameia, the last member of the royal family, were much more fraught. The paucity of information in our sources has led scholars to adopt different theories and genealogies. The succession of events, however, did not have a particularly strong influence on the development of Dodona and I will limit my discussion to Cabanes’ hypothesis, which is, in my opinion, the most

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<sup>86</sup> Plut. *Pyrrh* 34, 2–3.

<sup>87</sup> Polyb., 8, 24, 1; 12, 24j, 2; Plin., *HN* 8, 176; Iust., *Ep.* 18, 1, 1; 23, 3, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 2, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 5, 14 *et passim*.

<sup>90</sup> Diod.Sic., 22, 11.

<sup>91</sup> Meyer, 2013, 72–77.

<sup>92</sup> Raynor, 2019, 321–326.

<sup>93</sup> *SGDI* 1368 (together with Tarantines); *BE* 1969, 347.

<sup>94</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 30, 7.

<sup>95</sup> Cross, 1932, 89; Hammond, 1967, 588.

<sup>96</sup> Iust., *Ep.* 26, 2, 9; 26, 2, 11–12; 26, 3, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Trogo, 25; Frontin., *Str.* 2, 5, 10.

convincing:<sup>98</sup> After Alexander II died, his widow, Olympias, became regent, as their sons Pyrrhus and Ptolemy were not yet of age.<sup>99</sup> Eventually the eldest, Pyrrhus II, was crowned but, due to an untimely death, he was succeeded by his brother Ptolemy,<sup>100</sup> who also died soon after due to a fever on campaign.<sup>101</sup> The death of the last male Aeacid left the throne to a woman, Deidameia, most likely the daughter of either Pyrrhus II or Ptolemy.<sup>102</sup> She was assassinated in 232 by a certain Milo in the temple of Artemis, leaving no descendants.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.3 The shrine flourishes

From the end of the 4th century until the emergence of the Epirote *Koinon* in the 3rd, Dodona underwent the most significant development in its history, as confirmed by archaeology. There are many reasons for this unprecedented growth. Chief among these is the geopolitics of the period. In short, to try to understand the growth of Dodona as an isolated phenomenon is not only myopic but completely mistaken. The development of Dodona during this time period is entangled with the evolution of its territory, the dynamics present in the interaction of the Epirote *ethne* and the international events in which these *ethne* were involved.

#### 3.3.1 The cult area – Temples or treasuries?

If the dating of the structures is reliable, the first building of the cult area was E1, considered to be the temple of Zeus. A few more structures would come to fill this space over the next decades. Some of these buildings have been interpreted as temples, but new approaches suggest their function may have been to house treasures. Before I explain this recent theory, I will first describe the nature of these structures.

The **Sacred House**, where Zeus Naios was worshipped, was built at the end of the 5th century or the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup>. It was enlarged ca. 350–325 and in a third phase it was reconstructed (FIG. 3). It is commonly believed that this reconstruction took place during the reign of Pyrrhus I,<sup>104</sup> as is the case for many of the

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<sup>98</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 58–65.

<sup>99</sup> *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 393.

<sup>100</sup> *SGDI* 1348 might date to this period, but it could also refer to Neoptolemus, son of Alexander I.

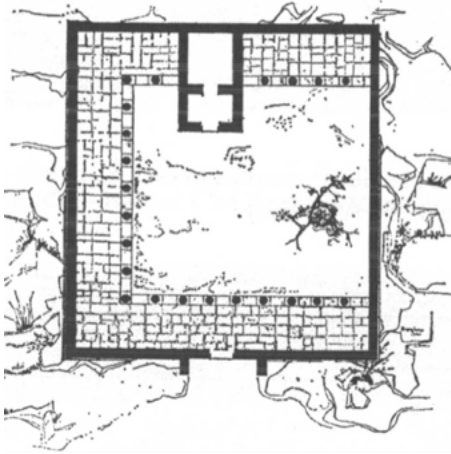
<sup>101</sup> *Iust.*, *Ep.* 28, 3, 1–2.

<sup>102</sup> *Strat.* 8, 52. The reference of Pausanias, “daughter of Pyrrhus (III?), son of Ptolemy, son of Alexander (II), son of Pyrrhus (I)” (4, 35, 3) is confusing, since he writes that the last Pyrrhus would be the son, not the brother, of Ptolemy, which chronologically is more difficult.

<sup>103</sup> Polyaeus., *Strat.* 8, 52.

<sup>104</sup> Parke, 1967, 118–119; Dakaris, 1971b, 43. The main reason for this date is the appearance of a coin featuring Pyrrhus in the layers of this phase. However, this merely indicates the *terminus post quem* (Emmerling, 2012, 44–45).

other buildings we will discuss below. The original isodomic wall was reinforced on the left side and the right one was removed. At the same time, a second, bigger wall was added, with 2.80 m of separation from the older one. It measured 20.80 x 19.20 m and formed a closed rectangle.<sup>105</sup> An Ionic colonnade simulating small stoas marked the north, west and south sides. As there were no columns on the eastern part, that side is assumed to have harbored the sacred oak. The temple was annexed to the north side of the wall and a porch in antis completed the entrance in the southern part.<sup>106</sup> Archaeologists have found fragments of roof and column decorations, such as palmettes and lion heads.<sup>107</sup> As Emmerling points out, there is no certain evidence about the dating of this phase.<sup>108</sup> In fact, some materials usually linked to this reconstruction might belong to the Roman period.<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, although it is not possible to confirm that it was built under the auspices of Pyrrhus, it is reasonable to think that the growth of Dodona in the first decades of the Hellenistic would have included building a larger temple for the tutelary god of the sanctuary.



**Fig. 3:** Building E1, third phase (Dakaris, 1963, 45, Abb. 7)

While this assumption is not at all far-fetched, it is important to keep in mind that the local population and pilgrims to Dodona did not solely worship Zeus. Archaeology, ancient authors, epigraphy, and numismatics all point to a greater number of cults, although it is unclear which ones were permanent and which ones were merely sporadic references to gods not officially worshipped at the site. I will examine this aspect in the next chapter. For now, we will focus on the constructions that have been interpreted as temples.

<sup>105</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 43; Emmerling, 2012, 33–36.

<sup>106</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 43; 39.

<sup>107</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 43–44.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*, 147–148 and 175.

The second most important divinity at Dodona was Dione. For decades, scholars have identified **Building Γ** as her temple (FIG. 4). This building, located north of the Sacred House, was erected in the second half of the 4th century or at the beginning of the 3rd. It measures 9.82 x 9.35 m.<sup>109</sup> Originally archaeologists reconstructed it as a pronaos with four ionic sandstone columns in the front and a cella with a pedestal and a statue of Dione. We remain, however, unsure about whether the structure was tetrastyle or prostyle.<sup>110</sup> Some fibulae, coins and epigraphs in plaques were found within the structure.<sup>111</sup> Both Emmerling and Piccinini have called into question the building's connection with Dione, arguing that Dakaris proposed this theory only on the basis of the structure's proximity to Building E1 and without any material evidence in support of the cult.<sup>112</sup> Emmerling instead suggests that the building may have functioned as a treasury or dining-hall.<sup>113</sup> The first possibility has been considered by other experts, especially Quantin.<sup>114</sup> The structure of treasuries was not too different from small temples. Although there is not a specific typology of treasure, a typical one used to have a distyle pronaos and the cella.<sup>115</sup> Since all the buildings of this sort in Dodona had small dimensions and a quite similar design, their specific identification as temples or treasuries is difficult.

The dating of **Building Z**, to the west of the Sacred House, corresponds to ca. 330/325–232, the reign of Pyrrhus (FIG. 5). It is given dated to this period based on the construction materials, mainly sandstone and tuff.<sup>116</sup> It measures 10.30 x 6.25 m.<sup>117</sup> Evangelidis did not initially find any columns and interpreted the building as a treasury.<sup>118</sup> Dakaris later classified the structure as a tetrastyle and prostyle temple in the Ionic style including a pronaos and a cella.<sup>119</sup> Since some oracular consultations found bear the name Themis,<sup>120</sup> **Building Z** was considered to be a temple for the worship this goddess. The theory, however, is difficult to substantiate.<sup>121</sup> According to Emmerling, this is the only structure that seems to have had a cult purpose because of the presence of an altar. In other words, the function

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<sup>109</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 51; Baslez, 1999, 391; Quantin, 2008, 17.

<sup>110</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 184.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem*, 185–186.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*, 185–186; Piccinini, 2016, 156.

<sup>113</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 207–209.

<sup>114</sup> Quantin, 2008, 22, who does not reject the idea of a temple-treasure at the same time. Mancini supports this interpretation (2013; 2018).

<sup>115</sup> Hering, 2015, 177–181. The author does not include Emmerling's work in her bibliography. For that reason, there is no review of her hypothesis concerning the buildings of Dodona.

<sup>116</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 194, who does not consider these criteria reliable.

<sup>117</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 52.

<sup>118</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 193.

<sup>119</sup> Mylonopoulos, 2006, 194.

<sup>120</sup> In that time, archaeologists only knew two cases, C23 and SGDI 1581. Both plaques were found in the area west to Building Λ (Emmerling, 2012, 194–195).

<sup>121</sup> Mylonopoulos, 2006, 194; Dieterle, 2007, 122.

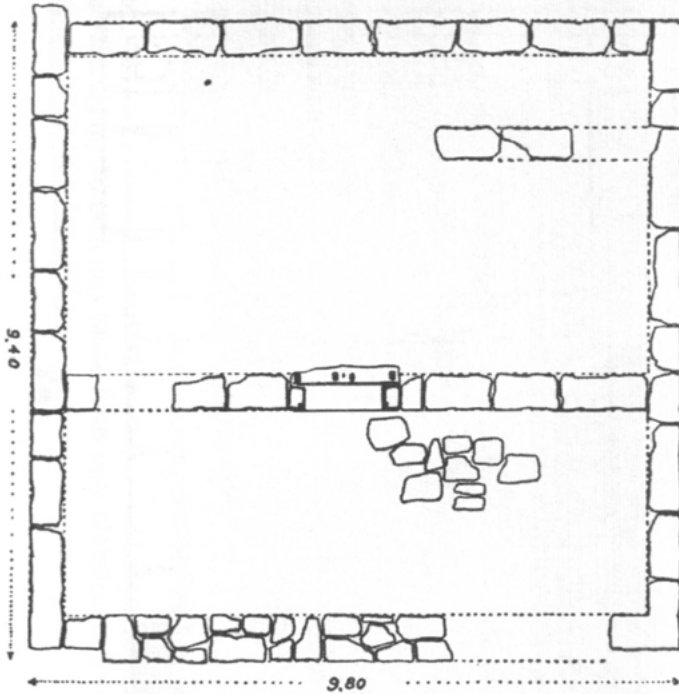


Fig. 4: Building Γ (Evangelidis, Ergon, 1958, 103, εικ. 97)

of the other so-called temples is uncertain.<sup>122</sup> This altar, catalogued as Z1, was located in front of the façade, next to a pedestal registered as Z2.<sup>123</sup> Mancini highlights the similarity of Building Z with Building Θ of Dodona, constructed in the following phase, and with the temple of the Molossian sanctuary of Rodotopi.<sup>124</sup>

A bit further to the west stands **Building Λ** (FIG. 6). It is conventionally dated to the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the 3rd,<sup>125</sup> but Dieterle places it at the second half of the 3rd century.<sup>126</sup> Emmerling identifies certain similarities between Building Λ and the *katagogion* of Cassope leads her to date the structure to the last quarter of the 3rd century.<sup>127</sup> Building Λ is small, 8.50 x 4.70 m, and differs from the rest of the structures. It has a simple layout, with a pronaos and a cella, distyle in antis. The two columns are octagonal and Doric, instead of the four Ionic col-

<sup>122</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 204–205.

<sup>123</sup> Or B10, if we follow the order established by Katsikoudis in his major work concerning the pedestals of Dodona (2005).

<sup>124</sup> Mancini, 2018, 678 and Fig. 7.

<sup>125</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 55–56.

<sup>126</sup> Dieterle, 2007, 124.

<sup>127</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 197–198.

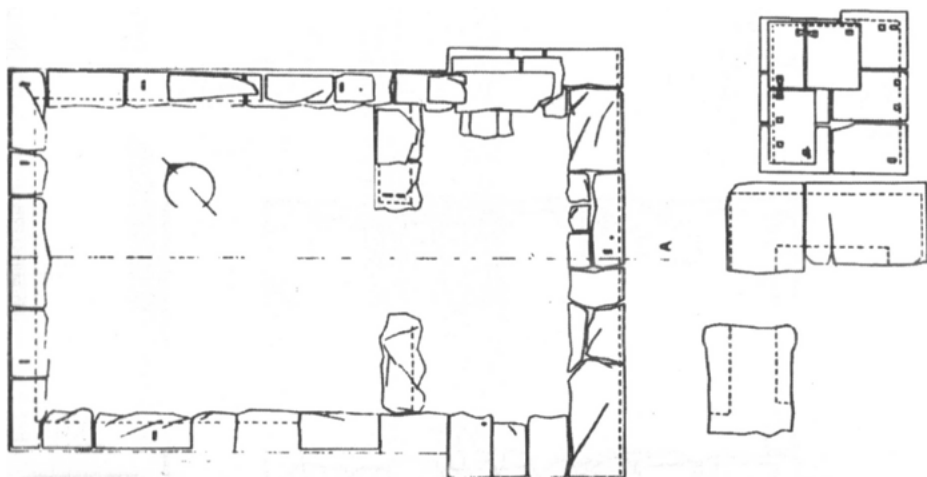


Fig. 5: Building Z (Dakaris, 1998, 52, fig. 20)

umns that we see in the other buildings.<sup>128</sup> In a recent paper Piccinini highlights similarities with two Chaonian buildings interpreted as treasuries and located in Phoenike and the sanctuary of Asklepios in Butrint.<sup>129</sup> Most scholars have identified Building Λ as the temple of Aphrodite, but this hypothesis has come into question. In order to corroborate the inconsistencies claimed by some scholars,<sup>130</sup> I will examine the connections between the goddess and Dodona.

Aphrodite appears in the *Illiad* as the daughter of Zeus and Dione,<sup>131</sup> a version apparently maintained by the Epirotes. However, the only material remain doubtlessly tied to this goddess in Dodona is an inscription on a small bronze wheel offering found during the excavations led by Carapanos in building O-O1.<sup>132</sup> Another object type frequently interpreted as a votive for Aphrodite is the statuettes of a woman with a dove. Given the way Dodona was excavated and how the information in the archaeological reports was presented, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number, typologies, datings, and findspots of these figurines. Four have already been mentioned from the previous phase (5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century), one in bronze and the others in terracotta. We only know that one of the terracottas, depicting a seated woman, was found in Building E1. In the Hellenistic period terracotta female heads appear

<sup>128</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 55–56.

<sup>129</sup> Piccinini, 2016, 159–160.

<sup>130</sup> Mylonopoulos, 2006, 194; Dieterle, 2007, 204–205; Quantin, 2008, 17–18; Emmerling, 2012, 206–207.

<sup>131</sup> Hom., *Il.* 5, 370–372.

<sup>132</sup> Carapanos, 1878, 47, No. 19 and pl. XXVI, No. 1: Ὀφελίων Ἀφροδίτα ἀνέθηκε (“Ophelion, to Aphrodite, he did it”); Quantin, 2008, 18.

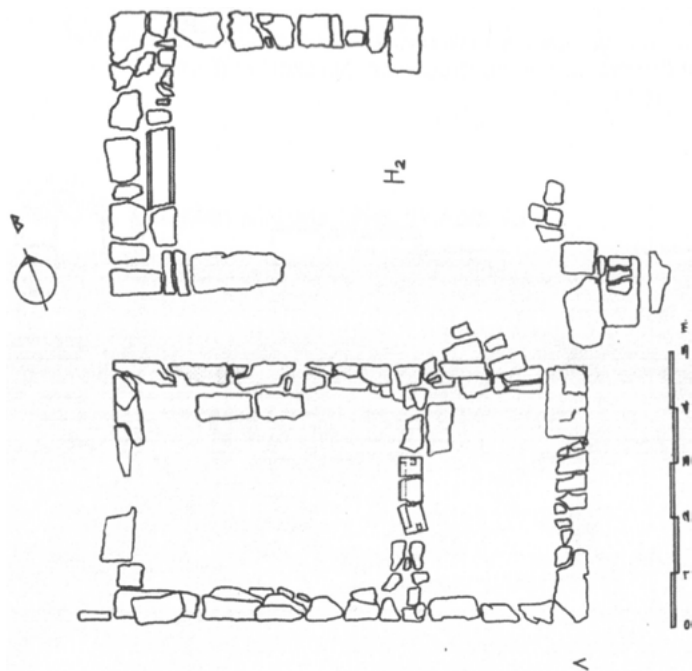


Fig. 6: Building Λ (Dakaris, *Praktika*, 1967, 34, εικ. 1)

as common offerings, although a few of them could be older.<sup>133</sup> Some of these appeared inside and in the surroundings of Building Λ.<sup>134</sup> Tzouvara-Souli also discusses a bronze figurine of a woman holding an apple, or something similar, in her left hand, first considered a priestess by Carapanos, and later linked to the cult of Aphrodite by this Greek archaeologist.<sup>135</sup> In his *Archaeological Guide to Dodona*, Dakaris states that the identification of this temple with Aphrodite is due to the discovery of the terracota figurines of women with doves.<sup>136</sup>

This iconography, however, is not solely or even principally linked with Aphrodite.<sup>137</sup> In fact, they are primarily seen in connection with Hera because the dove is a symbol of fertility.<sup>138</sup> The same applies to the female heads in terracotta. Hera, how-

<sup>133</sup> Dieterle, 2007, F131–144.

<sup>134</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 1979, 56.

<sup>135</sup> MA At., No. 29 (5th cent.), unknown location: Tzouvara-Souli, 1979, 56, εικ. 29α-β.

<sup>136</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 55. However, this is the only reference of this kind found in all of the bibliography consulted for this project. It may be that Dakaris has confused the female figurines with the dedicated female heads.

<sup>137</sup> Some examples of sanctuaries of Aphrodite with these offerings are Argos (Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, 161) and Miletus (Valdés Guía, 2005, 88).

<sup>138</sup> Baumbach, 2004, *passim*.



ever, did not have a major cult in Epirus, where the wife of Zeus was Dione, whose iconography is tightly connected to doves. One may surmise that these figurines were linked to a female deity, perhaps Aphrodite, perhaps Dione, or even both of them, as mother and daughter. This hypothesis may explain why no offerings at Dodona have been identified as votives for Dione, whose cult was the second most important in the shrine.<sup>139</sup>

In the eastern part of the sanctuary, partly covered by a basilica from Christian times, we can see the remains of **Building A** (FIG. 7), probably constructed in the beginning of the 3rd century.<sup>140</sup> Its size is much bigger, 16.50 x 9.50 m,<sup>141</sup> and only surpassed by the temple of Zeus. Again, the layout consists of a pronaos and a cella with four or six Doric columns in the front. There are signs of destruction, likely the Aetolian attack suffered in 219, and the damaged sandstone remnants were employed in the wall that divides both rooms.<sup>142</sup> To the east, archaeologists found a pedestal, 5.70 x 3.20 m, catalogued as A1, that may have been the base of an honorific monument or, less likely, an altar.<sup>143</sup>

Dakaris saw some connections between Building A and Herakles. Inside the building he found two reliefs depicting the hero fighting against Apollo and the Lernaean Hydra, respectively.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, he noted that the mythic genealogy of the Argead royal family included not only Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, but also his wife, Lanassa, a descendant of Herakles. This relationship was further cemented by the marriages of Olympias and Philip II of Macedon, and Alexander I with Cleopatra.<sup>145</sup> However, Quantin, who criticizes the lack of clear evidence in support of a cult of Herakles, argues that there should have been a temple to Apollo because the god appears in an oracular consultation<sup>146</sup>, features in one of the reliefs in the building and, as we will see below, is depicted in some offerings.<sup>147</sup> Was this the function of Building A? Emmerling casts doubts on the cult of Herakles and the function of the structure.<sup>148</sup> Mancini's study of architectonic features has complicated the debate further

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<sup>139</sup> Alroth, 1989, 78, who suggests that her union with Zeus was so strong that some offerings were dedicated to both of them.

<sup>140</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 53–54.

<sup>141</sup> Quantin, 2008, 17.

<sup>142</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 53.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibidem*, 53 (altar); Piccinini, 2016, 161 (base for the monument).

<sup>144</sup> Quantin, 2008, 18. The first relief has already been mentioned (MA At. No. 84; archaic or maybe 5th cent.). The second one, with a Hydra, has been conventionally thought to be a part of a metope of this building (Dakaris, 1971b, 53). However, more recently Katsikoudis has shown that it was more likely part of the tympanum (Katsikoudis, 1997, 260; Mancini, 2015a, 352–353).

<sup>145</sup> Howatson, 2011, 339.

<sup>146</sup> Dakaris, *Praktika*, 1967, 49, No. 5, the only known case where the French scholar published his text. Currently there are more in DVC 565 A, 2726 A, 2964B, and 3671; perhaps also 224 A, 1045 A, 1299B, and 2203B. In some cases it might refer to the city of Apollonia, though.

<sup>147</sup> Quantin, 2008, 17–18.

<sup>148</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 180–182.

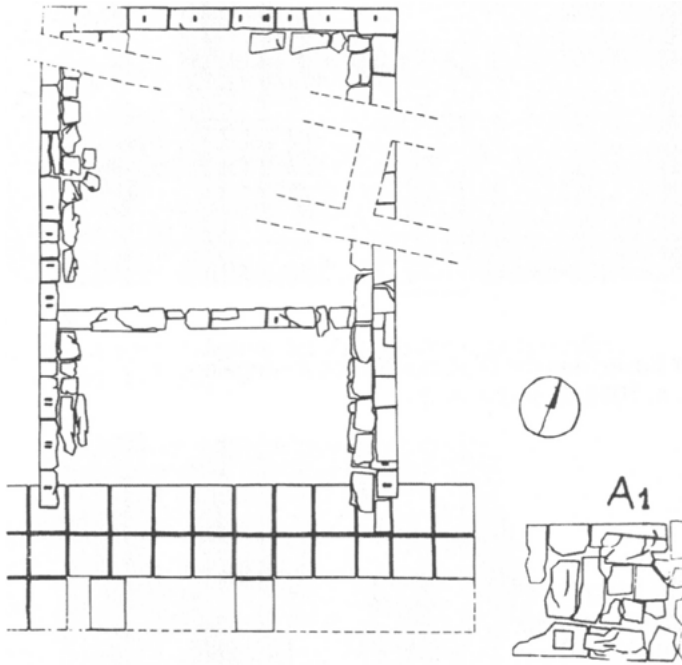


Fig. 7: Building A (Dakaris, 1998, 54, fig. 21)

by questioning whether E1 was the temple of Zeus. He rejects the theory of a cult to Herakles, suggesting that Zeus was worshipped in Building A, and possibly explaining why the basilica stands over its remains.<sup>149</sup>

To better elucidate the theory that the structures mentioned above were temples, it is necessary to make a brief summary. During this phase, ca. 330–232, five buildings were erected. E1 (Zeus), Γ (Dione), Z (Themis), Λ (Aphrodite), and A (Herakles). The archaeological data are problematic and, in many cases, it is difficult to determine which objects were found inside. Offerings, epigraphic documents and other materials are connected with different gods. However, as I will discuss later, the presence of these objects does not necessarily mean that those divinities were worshipped at Dodona. The theories of previous scholars have been recently revisited by Quantin, Dieterle, Mancini, Piccinini, Mylonopoulos and, above all, Emmerling. The scarcity of solid data means that any of these conclusions are tentative at best. In the following pages I will offer my own attempt to advance this debate, knowing full well that any hypothesis will remain uncertain in the absence of further evidence.

The typology of temples in Epirus is different to the one we usually find in central and southern Greece. For example, many of the temples in Epirus do not have

<sup>149</sup> Mancini, 2015a, 359–362.

colonnade.<sup>150</sup> It seems possible that some of these structures were not temples at all and that they may have served other functions. Emmerling's proposal to interpret some of the buildings at Dodona as treasuries, archives or dinning-halls seems reasonable to me.<sup>151</sup> In fact, Greek culture displays no strict boundaries between small temples and treasuries.<sup>152</sup> For instance, a treasury could resemble a *naiskos* and the façade of a Macedonian tomb looks like a temple.<sup>153</sup> Since I believe that Building E1 was the temple of Zeus,<sup>154</sup> it makes sense to me that other structures surrounded it, as the core of the sacred space. Taking this as our starting point, we shall ask two questions: who built them and for what purpose?

It is now crucial to consider the role that the historical development of Epirus played in the growth of Dodona and other religious sites. As we already know, there were three main *ethne*, Molossians, Thesprotians, and Chaonians in the region. If we admit the possibility of Dodona becoming a panepirote – not only panmolossian – sanctuary, could these three *ethne* have constructed their own treasuries as a way of enhance their identity and highlighting their presence in the sanctuary? We can see this mechanism at play in other Greek places, most notably Delphi. The sacred way to the temple of Apollo is lined with structures erected by *poleis* and communities, such as the Treasury of the Athenians.<sup>155</sup> It is rather plausible that the space of Dodona was used for a similar purpose. Molossians controlled the sanctuary at the beginning of the 4th century. As time went by, their ties with the Thesprotians became strong enough for both *ethne* to participate together in the same events in Dodona, such as manumissions.<sup>156</sup> It should not be surprising that both communities decided to designate a specific building to represent them. The Chaonian *ethnos* might have also proceed in the same way. It is not even necessary to be part of a *symmachia* to participate in these building projects since Dodona was common to all Epirotes.

Apart from E1, the Sacred House of Zeus Naios, only one more structure presents us with enough data to guess at – not confirm – its cult function. The presence of an altar in front of the entrance of Building Z, conventionally linked to Themis,<sup>157</sup> has led to its classification as a temple.<sup>158</sup> Votive offerings, common in both treasuries and temples, do not aid us in discerning the structure's function<sup>159</sup>. Neither does

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<sup>150</sup> Moustakis, 2006, 102.

<sup>151</sup> The first one to elaborated on this theory was Quantin (2008).

<sup>152</sup> Hering, 2015, 212–214.

<sup>153</sup> Mylonopoulos, 2014, 326.

<sup>154</sup> According to Pliakou (2010, 414–415), it is the only structure that we can be sure was a temple.

<sup>155</sup> Emerson, 2007, 29; Mancini, 2013, 81–84; Piccinini, 2016, 159–160.

<sup>156</sup> *SGDI* 1351.

<sup>157</sup> Mancini, 2013, 88–90; the scholar compares it with the sacellum of the sanctuary of Asklepios in Butrint, which, is also similar to Building Θ, to be constructed in the next phase.

<sup>158</sup> It is not certain if some objects located in front of the other buildings are altars or bases for statues (Emmerling, 2012, *passim*).

<sup>159</sup> Piccinini, 2016, 163.

the sculptoric representations in the buildings, since there are no specific motives for treasuries.<sup>160</sup> It is possible that Building Z was the place of worship for the second most important divinity in Dodona, Dione, whose temple is mentioned by Hyperides and Strabo.<sup>161</sup> It might also be possible, as I have suggested above, that Dione shared the cult space with Aphrodite, her daughter according to the local tradition. If this is the case, the figurines of women with doves and the terracotta female heads could be offerings for both of them. Hyperides performed his speech when Olympias had returned to Epirus, making the dating of Building Z to 330/325 – 232 quite plausible. If his speech took place ca. 330,<sup>162</sup> we may be able to explain why the oracle of Dodona ordered the Athenians to restore the cult statue of the goddess. Namely, the oracle coincides with the erection of a new permanent building to host it. In favor of the building's identification as the temple of Dione is its alignment with the temple of Zeus. We can see something similar in Olympia, where the temples of Zeus and Hera are parallel to one another.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, just to the north of Building Z archaeologists have found a fragmented female marble sculpture from the Archaic period. It is probably the cult statue of a goddess<sup>164</sup> and it is tempting to identify it with Dione. As for the other divinities attested in Dodona, I will devote the next chapter arguing against their having temples designated for their worship.

If Buildings E1 and Z were the only temples, buildings Λ, Γ, and Α, may have functioned as treasuries. The last of these especially might cast some light on this question. First of all, I do not entertain the possibility that Building Α is the temple of Zeus, as Mancini suggests.<sup>165</sup> In my opinion, there is no evidence that assures its cult function, whereas certain elements suggest a connection with the Molossian *ethnos*. A bronze cuirass has been found in this building, depicting the struggle between Apollo and Herakles for a tripod, as well as a relief of Herakles fighting the Hydra, probably not a metope, but a fragment of the tympanum.<sup>166</sup> This is the reason why Dakaris interpreted the structure as the temple of Herakles, who as already said is linked to Aeacid dynasty through the marriage of Olympias and Philip II and Neoptolemus' wife Lanassa. Pyrrhus' issues of coins with the image of Herakles during his campaigning in Italy surely constitutes an attempt to enhance this part of his lineage.<sup>167</sup> However, the presence of these two reliefs also points to the Molossians and may indicate that Building Α was the treasury of the Molossian *ethnos*. If this is right, it

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<sup>160</sup> Hering, 2015, 178–181.

<sup>161</sup> Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24–26; Str., 7, 7, 12.

<sup>162</sup> Hammond, 1967, 511.

<sup>163</sup> Scott, 2010, Figs. 7.3 and 7.7.

<sup>164</sup> Evangelidis, *Praktika*, 1932, 48 and εἰκ. 1. Dakaris (1971b, 55) linked it to Aphrodite. Due to its poor conservation, it is difficult to discern the features of a specific deity.

<sup>165</sup> Mancini, 2015a, 352–353. His hypothesis is reasonable, but unconvincing. It seems to me more logical that E1, the first building in the temenos of the sanctuary and the most rebuilt. The size, decoration, etc., of Building Α are not solely characteristic of temples, but also treasuries.

<sup>166</sup> Katsikoudis, 1997, 260.

<sup>167</sup> Borba Florenzano, 1992, 208–212.

would be reasonable to think that the building also contained reliefs of Neoptolemus, the mythical ancestor of the Aeacid dynasty. No such remains have been found.

In Building Λ, allegedly the temple of Aphrodite, the only relevant material found is a group of female heads, mostly from the Hellenistic period. Since treasuries can also contain offerings, I would like to focus on one detail. Previous authors have noticed similarities between this edifice and the two Chaonian treasuries located in Phoenike and in the sanctuary of Asklepios in Butrint, respectively.<sup>168</sup> Taking this into account, I suggest that Building Λ was the treasure of the Chaonians.

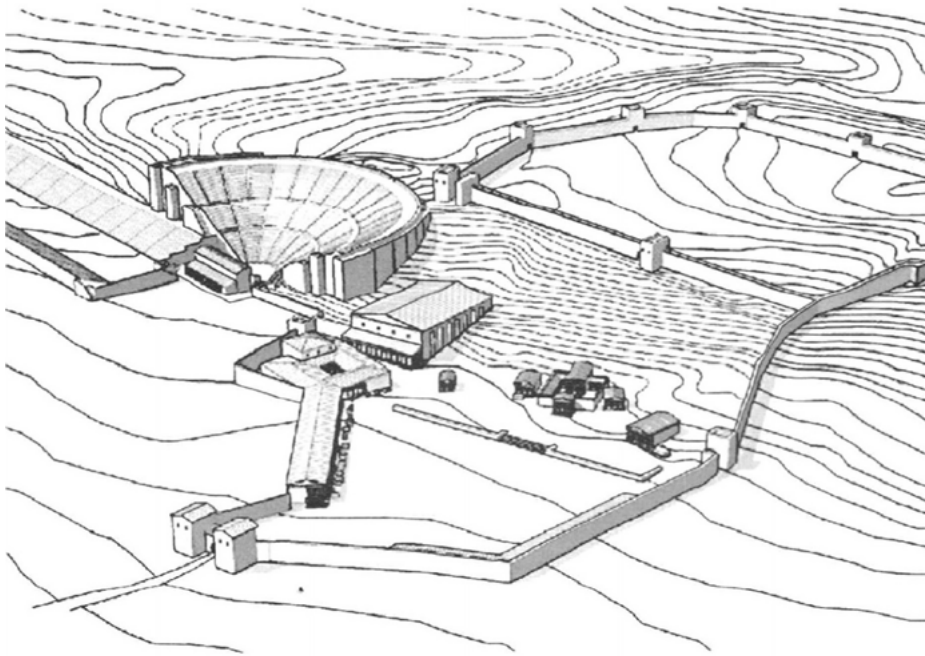
Finally, Building Γ, commonly considered to be the temple of Dione was destroyed by the Aetolians when they plundered Dodona in 219. It was never reconstructed and was replaced by a different structure in a new location, Building Θ. Dakaris identified the building as the “new temple” of Dione, but we will see later that it may have had a different function. In the case of Γ, there is no evidence linking its construction with a specific *ethnos*. Nevertheless, since the other two buildings have elements linking them to the Molossians and Chaonians, I propose to interpret Γ as the treasury of the Thesprotians. It is important, however, to remember that there is no material evidence supporting or discounting this theory. We may ask ourselves why the Aetolians destroyed this building and not the others. A priori, the Molossians would be the main target for the enemy, since they had been their most powerful enemy for over two centuries. On the other hand, Γ was not included in the restoration works after 219, but substituted, perhaps because it was no longer necessary to have a treasury for each *ethnos*. Γ’s replacement, Building Θ, was erected during a new phase in the political development of Epirus and might have had a different purpose. A last point to consider is the chronology, one of the main difficulties in understanding the development of Dodona. If the conventional datings of these structures are right – and this is far from certain – Building A, proposed here as the treasury of the Molossians, was erected at the beginning of the third century and it would not be the first construction of its kind in the sanctuary. The reason for its later date may lie in the control that this *ethnos* had over the shrine, which made highlighting Molossian presence within the sacred place unnecessary. The other *ethne* would have used their treasuries to do just that.<sup>169</sup> Pyrrhus’ monumentalization would have sought to reinforce his own position and power. Building a treasury for his *ethnos*, bigger than the other two, would have made a great impression on both the landscape and the sanctuary’s visitors.

<sup>168</sup> Di Maria, 2004, 332 (notices the similarities and sees them as temples); Piccinini, 2016, 160.

<sup>169</sup> Theoretically, Γ (Thesprotian) and Λ (Chaonian) were built between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 3rd.

### 3.3.2 Other structures

During this phase, in the border of the *temenos*, which is delimited to the north by the slope of the acropolis and to the west, south, and east by a wall, there are a few remarkable buildings unrelated to cult activity (FIG. 8). Two of them, E2 and O-01-O2, are worth mentioning, as well as the two Hellenistic stoas that run parallel to the walls. Further out, the theater underlines the importance of Dodona as the seat of agonistic competitions, the Naia.



**Fig. 8:** Reconstruction of the sanctuary Dodona in early Hellenistic times (Tzouvara-Souli, Vlachopoulou and Gravani, *Praktika*, 2006, 90, εικ. 1)

Located to the west of the temples and treasures, **Building E2** was constructed on the slope, facing south. It is considered to be the *bouleuterion*. Archaeologists have dated it to the beginning of the 3rd century, based on inscriptions, coins and other portable objects found inside its boundaries,<sup>170</sup> although Dieterle casts some doubts on this reasoning.<sup>171</sup> The *terminus ante quem* is 280, the year of the battle of Heraklea, commemorated on a Macedonian shield offered by Pyrrhus.<sup>172</sup> The

<sup>170</sup> Mylonopoulos, 2006, 195.

<sup>171</sup> Dieterle, 2007, 136.

<sup>172</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 43–46.

main structure measures 43.60 x 32.50 m, plus a 5.60 m wide Doric stoa from the same period as the entrance. Those who accessed the building would have crossed two doors measuring 1.63 x 3.25 m. In a small room near the entrance, a number of bronze objects destroyed during the Roman conquest was discovered. This space was probably the *thyromata*. The main building was divided into two parts: upper and the lower levels, with a ramp in the northern part, which would have held some seats. The roof was initially supported by two rows of Ionic columns.<sup>173</sup> A pedestal appeared in the western part. It may have functioned as a base for the ballot boxes. The main reason that E2 is thought to be a *bouleuterion* is the terracotta pieces found in the site, probably used for voting.<sup>174</sup> In fact, it was a habit to expose the public to the decrees of events to take place in Dodona, as well as other governmental decisions. These plaques were hung on pedestals in front of the eastern part of the *bouleuterion* and in front of the Ionic colonnade of the adjoining structure.<sup>175</sup>

**Building O-01-02** is supposed to have been the *prytaneion* of Dodona. The layout is divided into two sections, the first one (O) dated to the end of the 4th century or beginning of the 3rd and measures 31.50 x 13.50 m, while the second (O1-02) was apparently added at the end of the 3rd, in the following building phase. O seems to have been constructed at the same time as E2, the *bouleuterion*, as part of the same expansion of the sanctuary.<sup>176</sup> It makes sense for Dodona to have gained civic places with this kind of function, since epigraphic evidence shows that, as time went by, more political and judicial events took place there.

The eastern part has a 19 x 13.50 m peristyle, with a continuous stylobate of 4 x 5 columns.<sup>177</sup> Archaeologists found an open-space altar there. In the western side there was a square room, 12 x 12 m.<sup>178</sup> A double step runs along the eastern side. It has been interpreted as a place where spectators could stand – it does not appear suitable for sitting. Both rooms were connected through an entrance. Originally, the access to the building was on the northern side.<sup>179</sup> Inside, fragments of objects were found, among the most conspicuous 8th-6th century tripods and the protomos of a 7th century bronze cauldron.<sup>180</sup>

The identification of O-01-02 as *prytaneion* is less problematic than those proposed for the other buildings and is supported by most of scholars, but some doubt remains. A conventional argument in favor of the hypothesis is based on an oracular consultation that mentions a *prytaneion*.<sup>181</sup> However, the inscription does

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173 *Ibidem*, 60–61.

174 *Ibidem*, 61.

175 Dakaris *et al.*, 1999, 155–156.

176 *Ibidem*, 151.

177 Dakaris *et al.*, 1999, 151.

178 Emmerling, 2012, 212.

179 Dakaris *et al.*, 151–152.

180 Emmerling, 2012, 221.

181 C20, one of the cases where we can see the *δαιτοί*.



not specify that this building was in Dodona. It could be somewhere else. Emmerling has proposed a different theory, suggesting that it could have been a dining-hall, used for banquets and, by extension, feasts. She states that if there was a *bouleuterion*, a *prytaneion* would not be necessary.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, both Hyperides and Demosthenes mention rituals and festivities, and the enormous quantity of material linked to *symposia* points to the existence of a specific place for this purpose.<sup>183</sup> We should keep in mind that the Greek *prytaneion* was a frequent location for banquets<sup>184</sup> and it is not unreasonable to think that Building O-01-02 might have had this double function.

The largest construction at Dodona, the one that pilgrims first saw when approaching to the shrine, was the **theater**. Indeed, its size is surprising when we compare it to the sanctuary itself, the dimensions of which are rather small. Its maximum capacity was 18,000–20,000 people. Architects used the slope of the acropolis and added a solid wall to reinforce the structure.<sup>185</sup> The building manifests four different phases. In this chapter we are going to focus on the first phase, dated on the reign of Pyrrhus.<sup>186</sup> The theater consisted of a cavea, an orchestra, wider than a semicircle, a scaena with two square parascenia on either side, a Doric stoa on the southern side and a wooden proskenion.<sup>187</sup> The most obvious function of this building would have been to host artistic performances and the celebration of the local agonistic competitions, called Naia. This is an important aspect of Dodona that is tied to the political development of Epirus – the sanctuary, already a setting for various events, such as manumissions or concessions of privileges, should count on a playful space. It is difficult to explain its size, which contrasts with the more humble dimensions of the rest of the site. Although the competitions eventually became panhellenic, they were never as popular as the four big games. Perhaps the Molossian monarchy desired to show their power and wealth. However, if we dig deeper into this question, it is apparent that the claim of hellenicity by the Epirotes might have played a part. I will return to this point later.

In the western and eastern sides of the *temenos* were two **stoas**. Only the western stoa has been excavated, although the final archaeological report has yet to be published. It is united to the O-01-02 complex and runs south, in parallel with the wall, measuring 77.25 x 10.50 m, with fourteen columns lined up in the center.<sup>188</sup> The other stoa was previously investigated in the excavations led by Carapanos in 1875–1877, but he paid more attention to the pedestals situated in front of it.<sup>189</sup> They were rebur-

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<sup>182</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 222–223.

<sup>183</sup> Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24–26; Dem., *Mid.* 53; cf. Emmerling, 2012, 227–228 and 260.

<sup>184</sup> Schmitt Pantel, 1992, 96.

<sup>185</sup> Dakaris, 1973, 161.

<sup>186</sup> Smyris, 2018, 655–656.

<sup>187</sup> Dakaris, *Arch. Del.* (1960), 17; Dakaris, 1971b, 66.

<sup>188</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 215, n. 1304.

<sup>189</sup> Carapanos, 1878, 127–128.



ied and remain thus. The chronology of both structures is uncertain, although it is clear that they date to Hellenistic times.<sup>190</sup>

Between the *bouleuterion* and the theater, there once stood **Building M**, dated to 330–325.<sup>191</sup> Dakaris initially thought that it was the *prytaneion*,<sup>192</sup> but this theory was later rejected. The layout of the structure is 17.30 x 10.70 m. It is rectangular and a bit oblong in shape. The northwestern corner was cut by the theater, but the place remained in use.<sup>193</sup> Inside, a fireplace with ashes was discovered, as well as some fragments of coarse pottery from the 4th century. These findings led to the conclusion that the building was the house of priests, priestesses or magistrates.<sup>194</sup>

The **walls** were also important in Dodona, especially the ones that delimit the *temenos*. They were erected at the end of the 4th century.<sup>195</sup> The eastern side was connected to the southeastern corner of the acropolis. 65 m from this corner there is an entrance; facing east 190 m. from the acropolis, the wall turned west. The main entrance was in the southwestern corner, facing south. The wall continues parallel to the western stoa and Building O, crossing the area of the *bouleuterion* and probably once again connecting to the acropolis. There was probably once another entrance facing west in the space now occupied by the crossroad between the theater, Building O and the *bouleuterion*. Once these buildings were added to the sanctuary that entrance was closed.<sup>196</sup>

Another element scarcely studied is what experts call “**Ashlar Wall K**”, dated to a period before the 3rd century. This is the structure that reinforces the base of area that harbors the temples and treasuries. It is similar to the one in Olympia, where the treasuries stood. This means that pilgrims accessing the *temenos* from the southeastern entrance would have walked through an open-air space and mounted the steps to reach the cult and civic buildings.<sup>197</sup>

Before moving to another class of material evidence from this phase, it is important to reflect on the chronology of the buildings we have discussed so far. An exact dating for these structures is almost impossible since the remains do not provide much information and the archaeological techniques employed during the excavations, many decades ago, were not performed to modern standards. We can assume, however, that the period spanning the second half of the 4th century to the 3rd century was the most active in the history of Dodona. Traditionally, scholars have tended to link many of the structures, both civic and religious, to the reign of Pyrrhus I. But there is really no evidence of this, given the insecure date of the buildings. One may

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190 Emmerling, 2012, 219.

191 Dakaris, 1971b, 21.

192 *Ibidem*, *passim*.

193 Dakaris, 1971b, 62.

194 *Ibidem*, 21 and 62.

195 *Ibidem*, 76.

196 *Ibidem*, 62.

197 *Ibidem*, 56.

suspect that the attribution of such a complex process of development to Pyrrhus is due to his importance in both Epirus and the international sphere. He ruled for more than twenty years, 307–302 and 292–272, theoretically enough time to conduct such a large-scale renovation of the shrine. Nevertheless, we should take into account that Pyrrhus was almost always focused on political expansion and wars in both Greece and Italy. The payment of mercenaries, the maintenance of troops, their transport and other trappings of warfare would have taxed his resources and may have prevented him from diverting some to a different project. It is possible that he may not have been able to manage all these projects at once, even if he would have wanted to have a sanctuary emblematic of the power of the territory he controlled. In my opinion, it would not be surprising if his son and heir, Alexander II (272–252?/247?), had carried to completion the building projects begun by Pyrrhus. Sources do not mention many conflicts during Alexander II's long reign, suggesting that it was probably a stable and prosperous period, one ideal for the works set by Pyrrhus I and perhaps even the previous Molossian kings, chiefly Alexander I.<sup>198</sup> As we will see below, the Molossian territory shows a noteworthy development at the beginning of the 3rd century, when many of the fortifications appear to have been built. We cannot deny that this was a period of growth that affected urban organization. Monumentalizing Dodona at the same time makes sense and the theory that Pyrrhus conducted it is not without merits. I do not discard, however, that Alexander II may have been the one who finished it.

### 3.3.3 Pedestals and honorific statues

One way of transforming a sacred landscape is by erecting human-scale honorific statues depicting gods or real people, individuals whose remarkable actions deserved perennial commemoration. Statues provide us with a lot of information concerning the political dimensions of sanctuaries. At Dodona, the collective bodies that dedicated statues did not only seek to glorify those represented in sculpture, but also, as Kindt highlights, to enhance and reinforce the identity of the community.<sup>199</sup> It could be a local (a *polis*), panethnic, or even panhellenic mechanism. The physical location of the statue was crucial, too, since it determined the way it was viewed. Their layout sought to maximize visibility. Therefore, we can discern a three-fold purpose in erecting a statue: the memory of the individual depicted (the dedicatee), the reinforcement of collective identity (the dedicant) and the delineation of place (landscape). The inscriptions written on these pedestals, as we will see, evince this triple purpose.

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<sup>198</sup> If this was the case, it would be possible that Alexander I agreed with, or followed the plan of, his nephew Alexander the Great, who aimed to build more temples in several Greek sanctuaries, including Dodona (18, 4, 4–5).

<sup>199</sup> Kindt, 2012, 123–144.

A total of 71 pedestals and bases have been identified at Dodona, all of them located in the *temenos*. Unfortunately, a complete study of the subject has yet to be undertaken. In fact, those situated near the eastern stoa were unearthed in the campaigns of Carapanos and were buried again. They have not been re-excavated. The main work on the pedestals was published by Katsikoudis,<sup>200</sup> who counted 62 (cataloged as B1-B62, using the Greek term βάθρον). They are divided into four groups: B1-B11<sup>201</sup> were found near the Sacred House; B12-B17<sup>202</sup> to the east of the stoa of the *bouleuterion*; B18-B46<sup>203</sup> to the east of Building O-O1-O2 and along the western stoa; and B47-B62<sup>204</sup> were discovered along the eastern stoa in times of Carapanos. The last seasons at Dodona focused on the area of the western stoa. New pedestals were found but a properly detailed study has not been published. The only available information comes from the reports, more specifically from the work of Gravani,<sup>205</sup> who counts

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**200** Katsikoudis, 2005.

**201** B1 (end of 3rd cent. or beginnings of the 2nd): Katsikoudis, 2005, 133, εικ. 2, πίν. 1 (B1). B2 (second half of the 3rd cent. to 219): Katsikoudis, 2005, 133, εικ. 3, πίν. 1. B3: Katsikoudis, 2005, 133, εικ. 1 (B3). B4 (end of the 3rd cent.): Katsikoudis, 2005, 133–134, εικ. 4–5, πίν. 2 (B4). B5 (after 167): Katsikoudis, 2005, 134, εικ. 1 and 4 (B5). B6 (end of the 3rd cent. to 167): Katsikoudis, 2005, 134, εικ. 1 and 4 (B6). B7: Katsikoudis, 2005, 134, εικ. 6, πίν. 2 (B7). B8: Katsikoudis, 2005, 134, εικ. 7, πίν. 3 (B8). B9 (after 219): Katsikoudis, 2005, 134–135, εικ. 7, πίν. 3 (B9). B10 (3rd cent. to 219): Katsikoudis, 2005, 135, εικ. 8, πίν. 4 (B10). B11 (second half of the 3rd cen.): Katsikoudis, 2005, 135, εικ. 9, πίν. 4 (B11). **202** B12 (221–219): Katsikoudis, 2005, 12, εικ. 12, πίν. 5 (B12). B13 (end of the 3rd cent.): Katsikoudis, 2005, 136, εικ. 10 and 13, πίν. 6 (B13). B14 (end of 3rd cent.?): Katsikoudis, 2005, 136, εικ. 10 (B14). B15 (end of 3rd cent.?): Katsikoudis, 2005, 136, εικ. 10, 15, πίν. 7 (B15). B16 (end of 3rd cent.): Katsikoudis, 2005, 136–137, εικ. 10, 16, πίν. 7 (B16). B17: Katsikoudis, 2005, 137, εικ. 10 (B17).

**203** B18: Katsikoudis, 2005, 137, πίν. 8. B19 (B18): Katsikoudis, 2005, 137, πίν. 8 (B19). B20: Katsikoudis, 2005, 137, πίν. 8 (B20). B21: Katsikoudis, 2005, 137, πίν. 8 (B21). B22: Katsikoudis, 2005, 137, πίν. 8 (B22). B23: Katsikoudis, 2005, 137, εικ. 10, 17, πίν. 8 (B23). B24: Katsikoudis, 2005, 137–138, εικ. 10, 18, πίν. 19 (B24). B25 (end of the 3rd cent. to first half of 2nd): Katsikoudis, 2005, 138, εικ. 10, 19, πίν. 9 (B25). B26 (end of 3rd or beginnings of 2nd): Katsikoudis, 2005, 138, εικ. 10, 20, πίν. 10 (B26). B27: Katsikoudis, 2005, 138, πίν. 27 (B27). B28: Katsikoudis, 2005, 138 (B28). B29: Katsikoudis, 2005, 138 (B29). B30: Katsikoudis, 2005, 139 (B30). B31: Katsikoudis, 2005, 139 (B31). B32: Katsikoudis, 2005, 139 (B32). B33: Katsikoudis, 2005, 139 (B33). B34: Katsikoudis, 2005, 139 (B34). B35: Katsikoudis, 2005, 139 (B35). B36: Katsikoudis, 2005, 139–143 (B36). B37: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B37). B38: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B38). B39: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B39). B40: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B40). B41: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B41). B42: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B42). B43: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B43). B44: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140–141 (B44). B45: Katsikoudis, 2005, 141 (B45). B46: Katsikoudis, 2005, 140 (B46).

**204** B47: Katsikoudis, 2005, 141 (B47). B48: Katsikoudis, 2005, 141 (B48). B49: Katsikoudis, 2005, 141 (B49). B50: Katsikoudis, 2005, 141 (B50). B51: Katsikoudis, 2005, 141 (B51). B52: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B52). B53: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B53). B54: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B54). B55: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B55). B56: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B56). B57: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B57). B58: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B58). B59: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B59). B60: Katsikoudis, 2005, 142 (B60). B61: Katsikoudis, 2005, 143 (B61). B62: Katsikoudis, 2005, 143 (B62).

**205** Gravani, 2007a. Gravani, 2007b is the same report but published in a different publication.

nine new pieces (B63-B71).<sup>206</sup> We can assume that the real number is larger and it is just a matter of time until excavations resume and new pedestals and bases are recovered.

The ensemble of pedestals and bases does not have a firm chronology. Most of them seem to be from Hellenistic times, but in many cases even a tentative dating has not been provided. It goes without saying that their loose dating makes it difficult to separate the pedestals into the two phases of the Hellenistic covered in this volume—ca. 330–232 and 232–167. I present all of them in this section, but assume that their erection extended from the 4th century to 167, and that even a few may come from Roman times. The only four that still bear their inscriptions date to the end of the 3rd century, that is, the beginning of the period of the Epirote *Koinon*. We will come back to these texts in the next section.

The “material” information that we can draw from pedestals and bases comes from their shape, decoration, location and the kind of bronze statue that stood over them, among other things. In some cases, only the pedestal remains; in others, the base is also preserved. Unfortunately, no statue is preserved in its entirety. Some statues were standing or equestrian, leaning on one or another. The bases were either square or rectangular; some have steps or are checkered, and possess a column or are shaped like exedra.<sup>207</sup>

During decades of excavation, many fragments of the human-scale statues have appeared. All of them are dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2nd centuries.<sup>208</sup> We can distinguish four types – body parts, clothing, equipment associated with warfare and equine fragments. It is worth pointing out that apparently none of them depicted gods or mythological figures. Among anthropomorphic remnants recovered are the arms,<sup>209</sup> legs,<sup>210</sup> feet,<sup>211</sup> fingers,<sup>212</sup> face,<sup>213</sup> hair,<sup>214</sup> and eyes.<sup>215</sup> The garments, usually

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**206** Gravani does not follow any chronological ordering system but lists them from north to south. In this way, the unpublished pedestals are No. 3 (213–219, εικ. 12, 15 and 16; actually, already in the work of Carapanos, 1878, 127, No. 25 and pl. VI, 25; but not included in the catalogue of Katsikoudis) and 5–12 (213–219 and in pictures of No. 5 and 6 in εικ. 15 and 17).

**207** Katsikoudis, 2005.

**208** Dieterle dates some of them to the 4th century – in fact, some of the pedestals and bases are from this period. However, Katsikoudis (2005, *passim*, and in a personal interview), an expert on this topic, assures me that there is no fragment from the 4th century or earlier; for this reason, the datings of Dieterle are not included in this section. There is no specific study on these materials. Dieterle (2007) and Katsikoudis (2005) are the main treatments.

**209** MA At. No. 44: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F1.

**210** MA At. No. 798: Katsikoudis, 2005, 162, πίν. 40 (X78).

**211** MA At. No. 39: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F7. MA Io. No. 217: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F6.

**212** MA At. No. 41: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F2. MA Io. No. 5708: Katsikoudis, 2005, 160, πίν. 37 (X68). MA Io. No. 658: Katsikoudis, 2005, 160, πίν. 37 (X69). MA Io. No. 2548: Katsikoudis, 2005, 160, πίν. 38 (X70). MA At. No. 40: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F2. MA At. No. 42: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F3. MA At. 43: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F4. MA Io. 1377: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F5. MA Io. 1378: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F5. MA Io. No. 1379: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F5.

linked to war,<sup>216</sup> are fragments of cuirasses,<sup>217</sup> belts,<sup>218</sup> clothes (primarily skirts),<sup>219</sup> and sandals.<sup>220</sup> With regard to weapons, there are four sword handles. One of them in the shape of a lion or a panther and a bundle of bolts.<sup>221</sup> Another depicts an eagle.<sup>222</sup> The other two are undecorated.<sup>223</sup> There are also spears<sup>224</sup> and bows.<sup>225</sup>

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**213** MA At. No. 196γ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 163, πίν. 44 (X82). MA At. No. 122, 132, 134, and 138: Katsikoudis, 2005, 166, πίν. 52 (X97). MA Io. No. 144α and β, and 3057: Katsikoudis, 2005, 166, πίν. 53 (X98). Four fragments of eyelids in these cases.

**214** MA At. No. 196γ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 163, πίν. 43 and 44 (X81).

**215** The only objects made with a material other than bronze, usually calcareous stone and crystals. MA At. No. 120: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F8. MA At. No. 137: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F8. MA At. unknown reference: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F8. MA At. No. 1066: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F9.

**216** All helmets are interpreted as offerings in previous works, but one may surmise that some of them belonged to these human-scale statues.

**217** Different parts, as the side, clasp, fringe, or epaulet. MA At. No. 196κ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 144, πίν. 12 (X1 and X2). MA Io. No. 1382: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F35. MA Io. No. 1383: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F35. MA Io. No. 1381: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F35. MA At. No. 196ζ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 146, πίν. 14 (X6). MA At. No. 196ζ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 146, πίν. 14 (X7). MA At. No. 196ζ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 146–147, πίν. 14 (X8). MA Io. No. 1926: Katsikoudis, 2005, 147, πίν. 14 (X9). MA At. No. 196α: Katsikoudis, 2005, 148, πίν. 16 (X12). MA At. No. 196ι: Katsikoudis, 2005, 148, πίν. 16 (X14). MA Io. No. 1380: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F34. MA At. No. 196α: Katsikoudis, 2005, 151, πίν. 21 (X26). Also ornaments, as an star: MA Io. No. 1385: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F37. And three with a bundle of bolts: MA Io. No. 1384: Dieterle, 2007, 185 and 365, F36. MA At. No. 814α: Dieterle, 2007, 185 and 365, F32. MA At. No. 814β: Dieterle, 2007, 185 and 365, F32.

**218** MA At. No. 196ι: Katsikoudis, 2005, 148, πίν. 17 (X15). MA At. No. 196ι: Katsikoudis, 2005, 148–149, πίν. 17 (X16). MA At. No. 814γ: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F33. MA At. No. 196β: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F30. MA Io. No. 577: Katsikoudis, 2005, 149, πίν. 18 (X19). MA Io. No. 1390: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F19. MA Io. No. 1387: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F17. MA Io. No. 549: Katsikoudis, 2005, 150, πίν. 19 (X22). MA At. No. 196η: Katsikoudis, 2005, 150, πίν. 19 (X23).

**219** MA Io. No. 1391: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F19. MA Io. No. 1392: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F19. MA Io. No. 1396: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F21. MA Io. No. 1389: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F18. MA Io. No. 1393: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F19. MA Io. No. 1395: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F20. MA At. No. 1269: Katsikoudis, 2005, 154–155, πίν. 29 (X40). MA At. No. 196ε: Katsikoudis, 2005, 155, πίν. 29 (X41). MA At. No. 1269: Katsikoudis, 2005, 155, πίν. 29 (X42). MA Io. No. 1397: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F22. MA At. No. 196η: Katsikoudis, 2005, 155, πίν. 30 (X44). MA Io. No. 1287: Katsikoudis, 2005, 155–156, πίν. 30 (X45). MA Io. No. 1399: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F22. MA At. No. 1267: Katsikoudis, 2005, 156, πίν. 31 (X47). MA Io. No. 1785β-γ: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F28. MA At. No. 196β: Katsikoudis, 2005, 156–157, πίν. 32 (X49). MA Io. No. 1398: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F22. MA Io. No. 7623: Katsikoudis, 2005, 157, πίν. 32 (X51). MA At. No. 196β: Katsikoudis, 2005, 157, πίν. 33 (X52). MA Io. No. 674: Katsikoudis, 2005, 157, πίν. 33 (X53). MA Io. No. 7622: Katsikoudis, 2005, 157, πίν. 33 (X54). MA Io. No. 2543: Katsikoudis, 2005, 157–158, πίν. 33 (X55). MA At. No. 196ε: Katsikoudis, 2005, 158, πίν. 34 (X56). MA At. No. 196ε and στ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 158, πίν. 34 (X57). MA At. No. 816δ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 158, πίν. 34 (X58). MA At. No. 1287: Katsikoudis, 2005, 158, πίν. 34 (X59). MA At. No. 196ε: Katsikoudis, 2005, 158, πίν. 34 (X60). MA At. No. 1268: Katsikoudis, 2005, 158–159, πίν. 35 (X61).

**220** MA Io. No. 2881: Katsikoudis, 2005, 159, πίν. 36 (X62). MA At. No. 196δ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 159, πίν. 36 (X63 and X64). MA At. No. 196θ: Katsikoudis, 2005, 159, πίν. 36 (X65).

**221** MA Io. No. 1372: Dieterle, 2007, 185 and 366, F42.

**222** MA Io. No. 1373: Dieterle, 2007, 195 and 366, F41.

Among the equestrian fragments are hooves,<sup>226</sup> different parts of the body,<sup>227</sup> heads,<sup>228</sup> tongues,<sup>229</sup> and the harness.<sup>230</sup> Likewise, there are some ornamental motifs, such as two pieces with engravings,<sup>231</sup> a fragment of acanthus that was probably attached to a scepter<sup>232</sup> and a bundle of bolts.<sup>233</sup> Some statues had Macedonian-style elements.<sup>234</sup>

### 3.3.4 Offerings

Quite surprisingly, the building boom at Dodona during this period is not at all matched by the surviving votive offerings. In fact, the decrease of votive objects during this period is notorious, even if the dating of many pieces is rather dubious. There is a miniature tripod dedicated by Klearchos, a rhapsode.<sup>235</sup> Some humanoid sculptures depict mythological figures, although so far only a statue of Poseidon,<sup>236</sup> and perhaps another of Dionysos, has been identified.<sup>237</sup> Other anthropomorphic statuettes include terracotta female heads,<sup>238</sup> a *strategos*,<sup>239</sup> and a comedian.<sup>240</sup> A snake coiled into a circle completes the list.<sup>241</sup>

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**223** MA Io. No. 951: Katsikoudis, 2005, 152, πίν. 26 (X29). MA Io. No. 816α: Katsikoudis, 2005, 152, πίν. 26 (X30).

**224** MA Io. No. 1374: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F48. MA Io. No. 5571: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F49.

**225** MA At. No. 146: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F43. MA At. No. 147: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F44. MA At. No. 148: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F45. MA At. No. 149: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F46. MA At. No. 153: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F47.

**226** MA Io. No. 1375: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F11. MA Io. No. 1872 (3rd cent.): Katsikoudis, 2005, 164, πίν. 44 (X84).

**227** MA Io. No. 1402: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F23. MA Io. No. 1403: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F24. MA Io. No. 1404: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F24. MA Io. No. 1598: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F26. MA Io. No. 1401: Katsikoudis, 2005, 165, πίν. 48 (X91).

**228** MA Io. No. 1405: Katsikoudis, 2005, 164, πίν. 46 (X85).

**229** MA Io. No. 1376: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F12.

**230** MA Io. No. 1292: Dieterle, 2007, 382, F681. MA Io. No. 1281: Katsikoudis, 2005, 165, πίν. 49 (X93). MA Io. No. 1281: Katsikoudis, 2005, 165–166, πίν. 46 (X87).

**231** MA At. No. 816ε: Katsikoudis, 2005, 166, πίν. 50 (X95).

**232** MA At. No. 301: Dieterle, 2007, 365, F40.

**233** MA At. No. 266: Dieterle, 2007, 366, F50. It is not likely to have belonged to a statue of Zeus Kerainios.

**234** Katsikoudis, 2005, 183.

**235** Paris, Cabinet des Medailles (4th–3rd cents.): Piccinini, 2012, 217. The text: Κλέαρχος Διομέδοντος ῥαψωιδὸς μὲν ἀνέθ<η>κε (“Klearchos, the rhapsode, son of Diomedontos, dedicated me”).

**236** MA Ber. Misc. 10581 (second half 4th cent): Dieterle, 2007, 198–199 and 366, F69. Probably Poseidon because the figure is standing and leaning on something.

**237** Unknown reference: VV.AA., *BCH*, 1956, 301; Alroth, 1989, 76, No. 7.

**238** Dieterle compiles 27 Hellenistic heads – F131–F141, with more than one sample in each reference. We can add two more, MA At. No. 1161–1162: Dieterle, 2007, 204–205 and 368, F129.

**239** MA At., No. 16727 (beginning of 3rd cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F85.

The number of war spoils deposited as offerings also decreases, as was common in the Greek world, where dedicated weapons in this context were more numerous in the previous centuries.<sup>242</sup> There are helmets with different motifs – the inscription “MO” (for “Molossian”),<sup>243</sup> two warriors fighting,<sup>244</sup> an omphalos covered with a lion skin,<sup>245</sup> and a bolt.<sup>246</sup> Two remarkable shields were also discovered. The oldest is a Roman bronze piece bearing the text (Βασιλεὺς Πύρρο(ς καὶ) / Ἡπει(ῶ)ται καὶ Τ(α)ραντῖνοι / ἀπὸ Ῥωμαίων καὶ (τῶν) / συμμάχων Διὶ Να(ί)ωι) (“the king Pyrrhus and the Epirotes and the Tarentinans [dedicated this], from the Romans and their allies, to Zeus Naïos”).<sup>247</sup> It probably comes from the battle of Heraklea, which took place in 280.<sup>248</sup> The second one is a fragment of a Macedonian shield, which reads ΒΑ(ΣΙ)ΛΕΥΣ.<sup>249</sup> Dakaris thought it was dedicated after the victory over the Macedonians under Antigonus Gonatas in 274.<sup>250</sup> It was found in building E2, the so-called *bouleuterion*. Since the Roman shield was published by Carapanos, its location is uncertain. It makes sense, however, to think that it came from the same building, which became a common place for displaying these types of objects. Another shield fragment bears the inscription ΒΑΣΙ(---)ΡΟΥ. It seems to originate from Magna Graecia and Dieterle suggests that it refers to Alexander I.<sup>251</sup> An iron spear point dedicated to Zeus Dodonaios ([--]ος Διὶ Δοδωνεῖ) also forms part of this ensemble.<sup>252</sup>

### 3.4 The Epirote *Koinon* – 232–167 BCE

After the death of Queen Deidameia in 232, a non-monarchic government was established in Molossia, which catalyzed the emergence of a *Koinon* formed by the majority of Epirote *ethne*. The existence of this federal state is confirmed by several epigraphic, literary and numismatic sources. However, whereas the mainstream hypothesis assumes that the *Koinon* was strongly united, Meyer suggests that each *eth-*

<sup>240</sup> MA At. No. 18 (3rd cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 367, F84.

<sup>241</sup> Private collection of Sir John Beazley (ca. 300): Dieterle, 2007, 380, F596.

<sup>242</sup> Kindt, 2012, 126.

<sup>243</sup> MA At. No. 171 (second half of the 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 376, F469.

<sup>244</sup> MA At. No. 166 (second half of the 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 228 and 376, F465 (two heroes); Piccinini, 2012, 219 (warriors).

<sup>245</sup> MA At. No. 81 (second half of the 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 228 and 376, F474. Hammond (1967, 575) enumerates three of this kind.

<sup>246</sup> MA At. No. 165 (second half of the 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 185 and 376, F464.

<sup>247</sup> MA At. No. 514 (280): Dieterle, 2007, 225 and 380, F603.

<sup>248</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 43–46.

<sup>249</sup> MA Io., 1951 (274): Dieterle, 2007, 225–226 and 375, F425.

<sup>250</sup> Dakaris, 1971, 43–46. In fact, according to Pausanias, Pyrrhus hung several shields in commemoration of this triumph (1, 13, 3 = Ant.Pal., 751).

<sup>251</sup> MA Io. not found (4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 225 and 380, F595.

<sup>252</sup> MHA Wien (unknown reference; 4th cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 378, F535.



*nos* conserved its own identity and did not always participate in collective decision-making.<sup>253</sup> This theory is not unreasonable, as we will see. In foreign affairs, Epirus acted unilaterally as a single entity, even if there were occasional internal disagreements. Wars, alliances, and diplomatic shifts were a constant in the following decades. Conflict in northwestern Greece increased as a result of its location, between Rome and Macedonia; the sanctuary of Dodona did not escape these unscathed.

According to Pausanias, the fall of the Molossian monarchy was followed by a period of instability in which Illyrians attacked the Epirote territory.<sup>254</sup> The bonds with Macedonia were strong enough for the *Koinon* to become part of the Hellenic League, led by Antigonos III Doson. The other federal states to join were the Achaeans, Phoceans, Macedonians, Boiotians, Akarnanians and Thessalians.<sup>255</sup> Soon after Philip V of Macedon fought and defeated the Aetolian *Koinon* in the Social War (220 – 217). Epirotes, Messenians, Achaians and Akarnanians supported the king in the conflict.<sup>256</sup> The outcome was largely beneficial to Epirus,<sup>257</sup> although Aetolian troops, led by Skopas, plundered the sanctuary of Dodona, burned down the porticoes, destroyed many of the offerings and demolished the sacred house in 219.<sup>258</sup>

The historical development of Epirus from the Social War to 167 is characterized by a continuous play of alliances with Macedonia or Rome. Two homonymous individuals will serve as our guiding thread. Charops the Elder, one of the main leaders of the *Koinon*,<sup>259</sup> helped Rome, then an ally of Epirus, in its war against Philip V.<sup>260</sup> His grandson Charops the Younger was notorious during the reign of Perseus. During the Third Macedonian War Epirus had a faction, led by Charops, that supported Rome, while the other bloc opted for the son of Philip V.<sup>261</sup> According to Polybius, Kephalus and Antinoos, who governed the *Koinon*, joined Perseus as a consequence of the ambition and wiles of Charops the Younger.<sup>262</sup>

These passages from Diodorus and Polybius contain valuable information about the internal organization of the Epirote *Koinon*. Scholars have maintained an extensive debate regarding the leadership of this federal state, especially the number of *strategoi* that ruled it – one or three. Livy refers to an embassy sent by the Epirotes to Philip V and Rome to establish a common peace. Here three men, Aeropos, Der-

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<sup>253</sup> Meyer, 2013, 106, 110 – 113 and 131.

<sup>254</sup> Paus., 4, 35, 5.

<sup>255</sup> Polyb., 4, 9, 4 and 4, 15, 1.

<sup>256</sup> Polyb., 4, 5 ss.

<sup>257</sup> Polyb., 5, 103, 7 and 5, 107, 2.

<sup>258</sup> Polyb., 4, 67, 1–5. Note that the Sacred House – τὴν ἱερὰν οἰκίαν – is interpreted here as the temple of Zeus.

<sup>259</sup> Polyb., 20, 3, 1. He appears in *SEG* XL, 690, which provides information concerning the contacts between the *Koinon* and Rhodes.

<sup>260</sup> Diod.Sic., 30, 5; Livy, 32, 11, 1–5.

<sup>261</sup> Diod.Sic., 30, 5.

<sup>262</sup> Polyb., 27, 15.



das, and Philip, acted on behalf of the *Koinon*.<sup>263</sup> However, in an inscription from Magnesia from the year before the embassy containing an invitation to participate in the Leukophrenia, those who ratified the proposal were the *strategos* Chrison and the *synarchontes* – “Κρίσωνα τὸν στραταγὸν καὶ τοὺς συνάρχον/τας”.<sup>264</sup> Once again Livy, recounting a meeting between Philip V and the Roman consul, states that the event was organized by “the praetor Pausanias and the master of the horse Alexander”.<sup>265</sup> He later mentions another meeting between a Roman consul and “the Epirote *legati*”.<sup>266</sup> During the Third Macedonian War (171–168), at the signing of a peace treaty between Thrace and Epirus, Kephalus acted on behalf of the *Koinon*.<sup>267</sup> One may surmise that he was the only leader, but he appears to co-rule with Antinous in a later passage,<sup>268</sup> and even a third, Theodotus, in a following episode.<sup>269</sup>

The multiplicity of versions has inspired scholars to attempt to discern a pattern for the organization of Epirus. Tréheux, who compares it with other Greek *koina*, supports the hypothesis of a unique leader and argues that Livy’s terminology may be misleading.<sup>270</sup> Cabanes reconstructs a more complex framework with one *strategos* and two *prostates*.<sup>271</sup> Salmon, on the other hand, deems it more probable that there were three *strategoî*, with one of them acting as the eponymous *strategos*; besides, each *ethnos* had a *prostates*.<sup>272</sup> Since I consider the epigraphic evidence to be more reliable than the literary sources in this case, Cabanes’ hypothesis seems more accurate. There is a remarkable number of documents mentioning one person at the head of the Epirote *Koinon*, but sometimes they name three. Apart from the *strategoî* and *prostates*, there was a federal assembly, a *synedrion*, which assisted the government.<sup>273</sup> As I explained before, it is possible that there was also a *prytaneion*, located in Dodona and identified as Building O-O1-O2. The only reference to a *prytaneion* in Dodona, however, is unclear, since the oracular consultation that mentions it does not necessarily explicitly refer to Dodona.<sup>274</sup> Besides, Lhôte dates it to the 4th-3rd centuries and DVC to the end of the 5th century or the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup>. Therefore,

<sup>263</sup> Livy, 29, 12, 8–12.

<sup>264</sup> *I.Magn.* 32, ll. 37–38.

<sup>265</sup> Livy, 32, 10, 2 (“Pausanias praetor et Alexander magister equitum”); note that he employs Latin terms in a Greek context.

<sup>266</sup> Livy, 36, 35, 8.

<sup>267</sup> Livy, 43, 18, 2.

<sup>268</sup> Livy, 27, 15, 6–8.

<sup>269</sup> Livy, 30, 7, 2.

<sup>270</sup> Tréheux, 1975, 163–166.

<sup>271</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 355–356 and 364. *SGDI* 1338, 1339, 1349, and 1350 are some examples where we can see only one *strategos*, as he highlights.

<sup>272</sup> Salmon, 1987, 132–133.

<sup>273</sup> *I.Magn.* 32, l. 37. Hatzopoulos, 1999, 385–386.

<sup>274</sup> C20; *LOD* 16; *DVC* 1368 A.

it does not match with the chronology of the *Koinon*. Cabanes himself rejects the theory of a *prytaneion*.<sup>275</sup>

Another aspect of the *Koinon* that remains unclear is whether it was centralized or enjoyed some kind of internal autonomy. We can be sure that there was a feeling of a common Epirote identity, as some like *SGDI* 1338 sources attest. However, this does not necessarily entail that the federal state did not allow each *ethnos* a certain degree of independence. Meyer suggests this possibility. For example, in Gitana 2,500 seals were found with the inscription “of the Thesprotians” on some, and “of the Molossians” on others. The dating is uncertain, but some of them may be from this period. If this is the case, it might be that each *ethnos* kept some specific prerogatives.<sup>276</sup> Moreover, when Rome conquered Epirus, the Molossians alone were punished for their support of Perseus of Macedonia,<sup>277</sup> since the Thesprotians and Chaonians had contributed troops to the Roman army.<sup>278</sup> At least in this case, there was not a common agreement among the members of the *Koinon*. Meyer might be right, although we should remember that we are dealing with a martial context, where exceptions to regular government are not uncommon. It is possible that such an unstable period would have bred dissent, resulting in the *ethne* holding different positions. This also means that the *Koinon* was not unified enough to function as a singular entity. The available sources are not definitive enough to confirm any of these hypotheses.

### 3.4.1 The recovery of Dodona after the Aetolian plundering of 219 BCE

After the Aetolian attack in 219, Dodona underwent reconstruction. Most of the buildings at the sanctuary show marks of damage and restoration. A few years later more structures were erected.

Polybius refers to the destruction of the Sacred House, supposedly the temple of Zeus.<sup>279</sup> On the other hand, Diodorus states that the Aetolians set fire to the temple, with the exception of the cella.<sup>280</sup> Dakaris confirmed that there were no signs of burning in Building E1,<sup>281</sup> but archaeologists date a modification of the structure to this time (FIG. 9). E1 became a bigger Ionic temple with four columns in the façade. Covering an area of 14.40 x 7.10 m, the inside of the building had three rooms.<sup>282</sup> The colonnade of the wall was also reconstructed, and a propylaeum was added to the en-

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<sup>275</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 385.

<sup>276</sup> Meyer, 2013, 106–113 and 131.

<sup>277</sup> Plut., *Aem.* 29.

<sup>278</sup> Livy, 43, 23.

<sup>279</sup> Polyb., 4, 67, 3.

<sup>280</sup> Diod.Sic., 26, 4, 7.

<sup>281</sup> Dakaris, 1973, 163.

<sup>282</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 47.

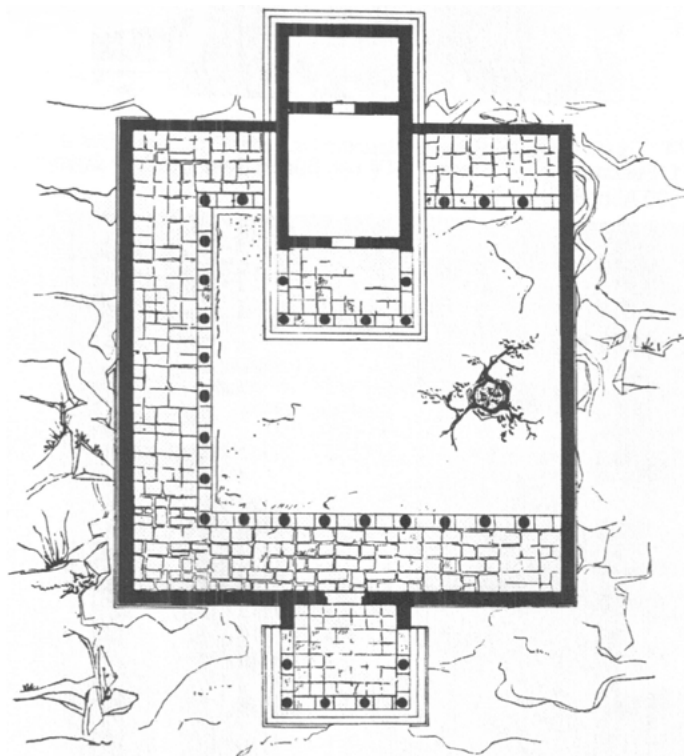


Fig. 9: Building E1, fourth phase (Evangelidis and Dakaris, Arch. Eph., 1959, πίν. 9)

trance, still in the southern part.<sup>283</sup> Both temple and entrance were aligned. There were probably four columns in this portico.<sup>284</sup>

Building Γ, the so-called temple of Dione, identified here as the treasury of the Thesprotian *ethnos*, was probably destroyed at this time.<sup>285</sup> According to the conventional theory, it was abandoned and replaced by a new temple for the goddess, **Building Θ** (FIG. 10), located between Γ and E1.<sup>286</sup> It measured 9.85 x 6.35 m<sup>287</sup> and was probably tetrastyle and prostyle, with a pronaos and a cella, although only one column, made with conglomerate stone, was found.<sup>288</sup> In the middle of the major cella, archaeologists discovered a pedestal.<sup>289</sup> As noted by Emmerling, conglomerate stone was the main material employed in the restoration works after the

<sup>283</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 46–48; Hatzopoulos and Mari, 2004, 508.

<sup>284</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 51–54.

<sup>285</sup> Parke, 1967, 120; Dakaris, 1971b, 50–51; Dakaris, 1973, 163.

<sup>286</sup> Hatzopoulos and Mari, 2004, 508.

<sup>287</sup> Quantin, 2008, 17.

<sup>288</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 188–189.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibidem*, 188.

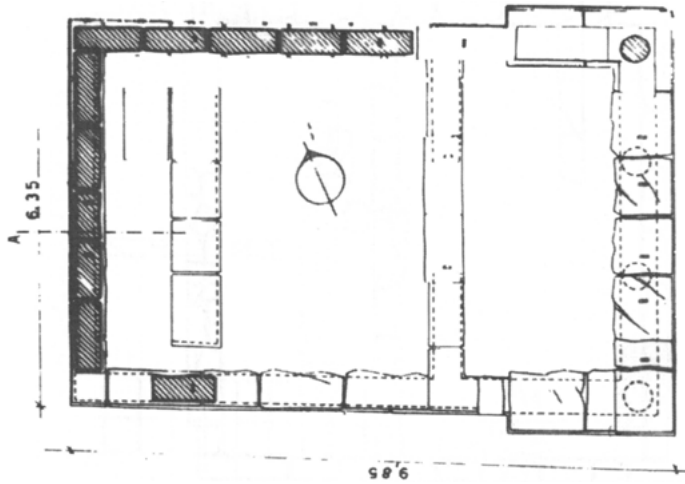


Fig. 10: Building Θ (Dakaris, 1998, 51, fig. 19)

plunder of 219, but the architectonic features of the building and the other materials could date to an earlier time or even be from the Roman period. Nevertheless, given the uncertainty of the dates, I follow the conventional chronology.<sup>290</sup> As for its function, Emmerling suggests that it might have been a treasury and points out that there is nothing in the structure connected to the worship of Dione.<sup>291</sup> Mancini points out the similarities between this structure, Building Z and the temple of Rodotopi.<sup>292</sup>

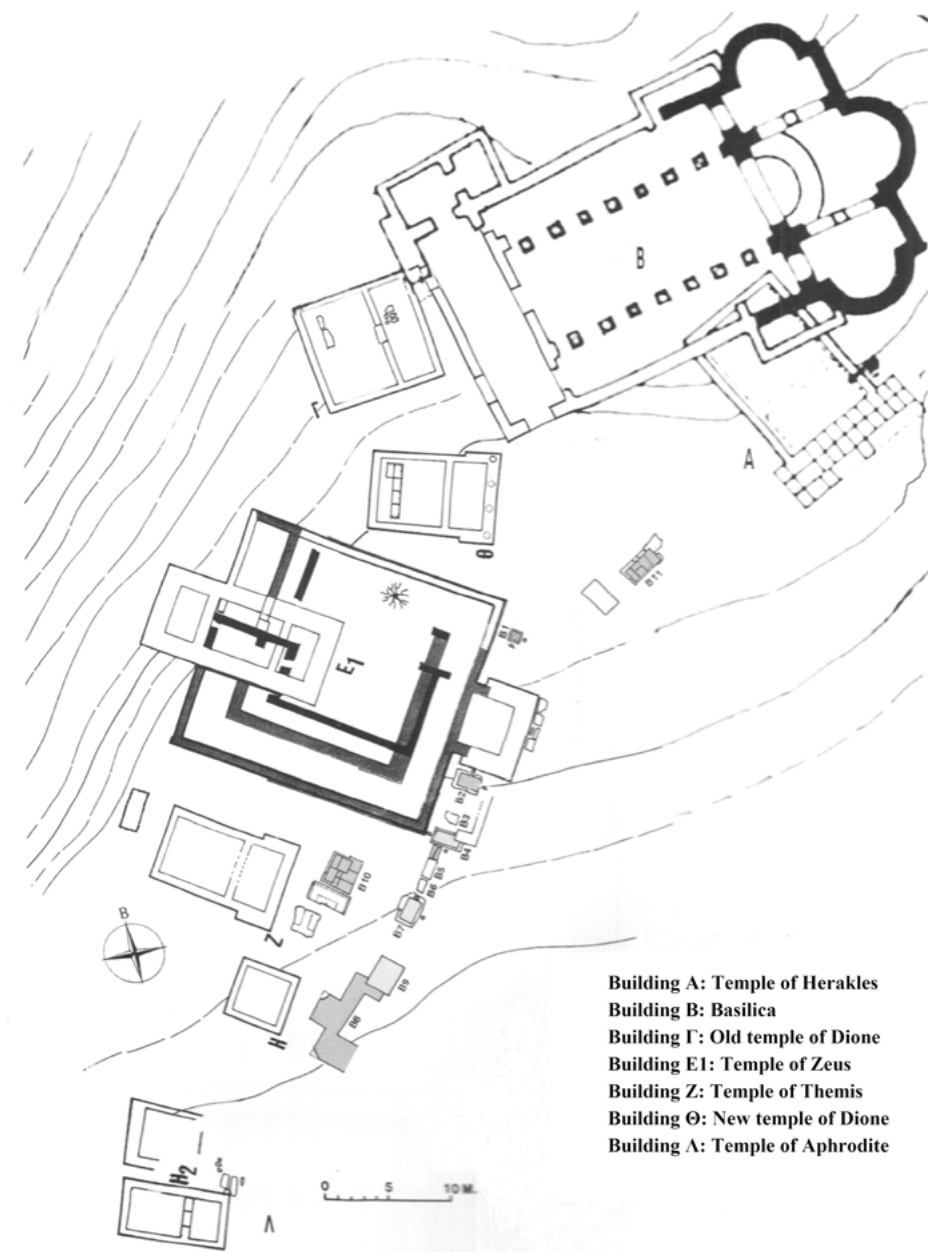
In this study, I suggest that three of the so-called temples, A, Λ, and Γ, were actually the treasuries of the Molossians, Chaonians, and Thesprotians, respectively. The status of Dodona as a panepirote sanctuary, a religious space common to all the *ethne* of the territory, makes it likely that these structures would have been linked to specific communities. Would Building Θ have played a role in this ensemble? This new period in Epirote history is characterized by the emergence of a *Koinon* in 232, probably composed of the three main *ethne*. In order to physically manifest this in the panepirote sanctuary, they may have transformed the religious space by adding a structure emphasizing the presence of the federal state. I propose that we identify Building Θ as the treasury of the Epirote *Koinon*. We can see a clear parallel in Delphi, where the recently founded Boiotian *Koinon* probably built a treasury at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century that represented all the members of the confederation.<sup>293</sup> This could also explain why Building Γ was abandoned – it was not necessary to restore the destroyed treasury of the Theosprotian *ethnos*, since the *Koinon* was now more impor-

<sup>290</sup> *Ibidem*, 190 – 191.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibidem*, 191 – 192 and 207 – 209.

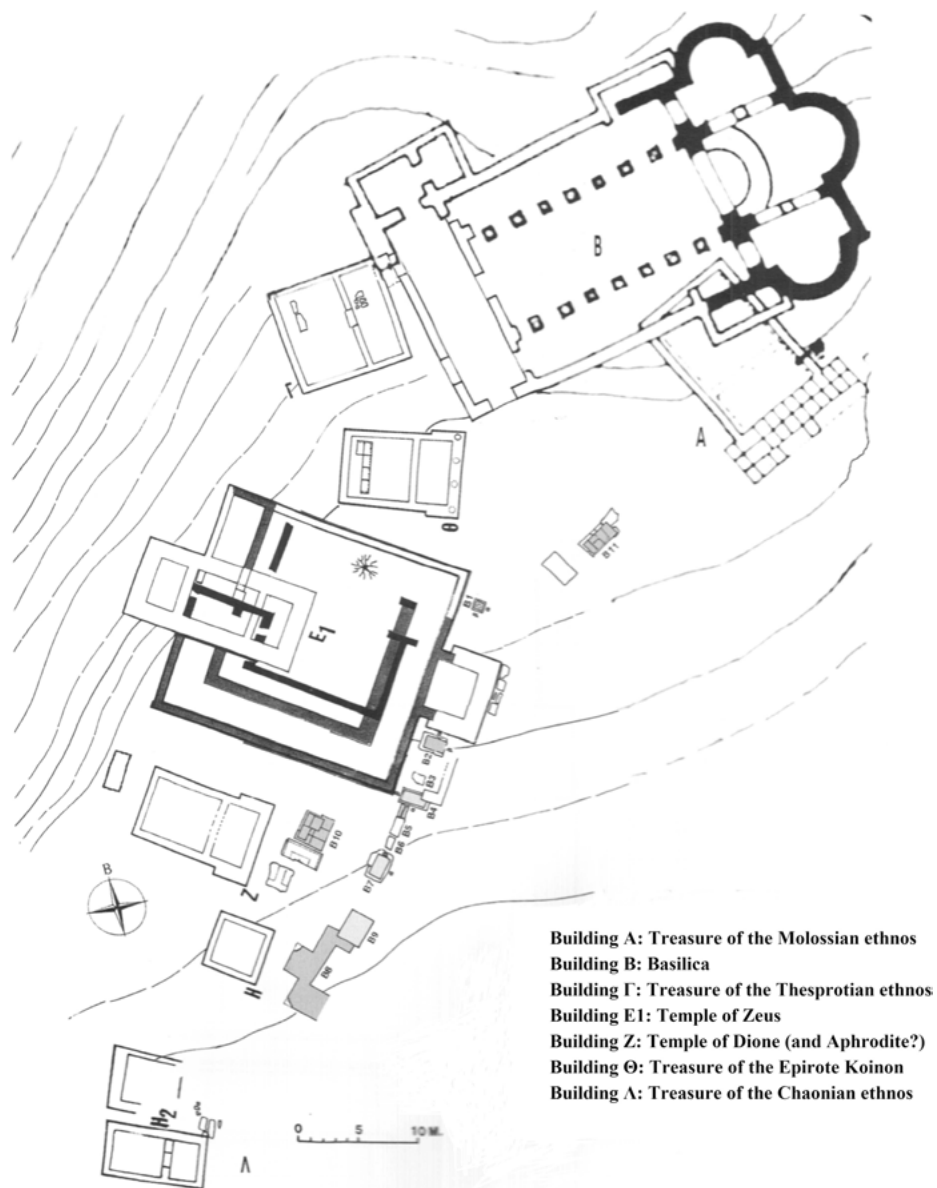
<sup>292</sup> Mancini, 2018, 678 and Fig. 7.

<sup>293</sup> Partida, 2000, 547 – 550.



**Fig. 11:** Dodona, plan of the sacred area – Conventional version (Katsikoudis, 2005, εικ. 1; modified by the author)

tant. FIG. 11 and FIG. 12 show a comparative of both conventional and new theories, respectively, regarding the identification of the buildings of the sacred area.



**Fig. 12:** Dodona, plan of the sacred area – New interpretation (Katsikoudis, 2005, *εικ.* 1; modified by the author)

Building E2, the bouleuterion, also suffered during the Aetolian attack. In its restoration, columns of conglomerate stone were employed in the new stoa. Inside,

near the altar of Zeus Naios, Dione, and Zeus Bouleos, there was a dedication by Charops the Elder.<sup>294</sup> Its neighbor, Building O, does not have signs of damage but was expanded at the end of the 3rd century with the annex of O1,<sup>295</sup> probably accommodations for government officials, as well as O2.<sup>296</sup> The northern access to the building was closed.<sup>297</sup> All rooms in O1 were connected and there was an Ionic colonnade in the corridor. The complex seems to have been destroyed in 167,<sup>298</sup> although it was used during the Roman period. This is a good place to remember Emmerling's suggestion that these buildings hosted *symposia*. The structure's identification as the *prytaneion*, despite not confirmed with strong arguments, does not exclude the possibility of holding banquets there.

The second phase of the architectonic development of the theater of Dodona dates to this time, after the Aetolian sack.<sup>299</sup> This new version added two small rectangular annexes in front of the paraskenia, as well as two propylaea with Ionic semi-columns. Each side had a door and a wall joined both of them. The proskenium became more monumental and some terracotta tiles from the ridge-roof were stamped with the inscription ΔΙΟΣ ΝΑΟΥ.<sup>300</sup>

Linked to the development and organization of competitions in Dodona, the Naia, the stadium, a new structure, enhanced the agonistic dimensions of the sanctuary. Probably built after 219, its western part has not been fully excavated.<sup>301</sup> Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that Dodona hosted hippic activities and that a hippodrome, not yet found, formed part of the landscape.<sup>302</sup> Last, but not least, Building M was completely ruined in the Aetolian attack. It appears that the space between the *bouleuterion* and the theater was employed for the accumulation of the destruction that resulted from the sack.<sup>303</sup>

We have previously pointed out that that the sacred area of Dodona was chosen as the main location for the dedication of sculptures on pedestals. The erection and placement of human-scale statues was not executed at random, but rather with purpose and specific motivations. Their display in the sanctuary followed a pattern – in front of buildings and along the main walkway used by visitors to the site. I will delve into this topic later at greater depth, but I would like to take a moment to dwell on the four inscriptions on these pedestals that are preserved. Their content

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<sup>294</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 61.

<sup>295</sup> Dakaris *et al.*, 155.

<sup>296</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 217–218.

<sup>297</sup> Dakaris *et al.*, 152.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibidem*, 156.

<sup>299</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 69; Hatzopoulos and Mari, 2004, 508; Smyris, 2018, 656.

<sup>300</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 70.

<sup>301</sup> Parke, 1967, 121; Eidinow, 2007, 62.

<sup>302</sup> Cabanes, 1988b, 54.

<sup>303</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 62.



illustrates the kind of information that was commonly displayed on these honorific monuments and highlights Dodona's importance in the Epirote *Koinon*.

The four inscriptions date to the end of the 3rd century. The first one, C14, is on pedestal 12, located east of the stoa of the *bouleuterion*. The pedestal once supported a standing statue.<sup>304</sup> The text relates that the Illyrian *Koinon* of the Bylliones dedicated it to Chrison son of Sabyrtos, a Molossian and Kuestian, for his virtue and good actions. The artist in charge of the execution of the sculpture was Athenogenes. The dating for the monument is 232 – 219.<sup>305</sup> It is not known whether Chrison held an important position, but from the chronology and his demonym we may surmise that he was associated with the Epirote *Koinon*. This is only a hypothesis, however, and we cannot discount the possibility that he was “just” a special benefactor to the Bylliones.

Pedestal 16, found in the same location, bears the second dedication, C15, which dates to around the same period.<sup>306</sup> This pedestal also once bore a standing figure. The dedicant this time is the Epirote *Koinon*, which honored Menelaos son of Chrison, a Molossian and Kuestian, for his good actions. Athenogenes too was responsible for the sculpture. C16 is on the same pedestal, 16, but provides different information,<sup>307</sup> namely a decree in which Kallimelo son of Simalios is designated *proxenos* of the Epirotes and receives the rights associated with the honor. Despite the absence of the term “*Koinon*”, it is safe to assume that the *proxenia* was bequeathed by the federal state. The record states that Myrtilos, a Chaonian, was important in this decision. Once again, Athenogenes is the sculptor. According to Dakaris, the statue associated with this pedestal was erected before the Aetolian attack in 219. After the sack, during which the original statue was perhaps destroyed, a new sculpture and a second inscription were added.<sup>308</sup> Last of all, pedestal 13 contains the fourth inscription, C17,<sup>309</sup> which explains that, thanks to all his good deeds, Mylonos son of Sosandros, a Thesprotian, received the privilege of having an honorific statue erected in his memory by the decision of the Epirote *Koinon*.

What conclusions can we draw from this information? First, we must keep in mind that every religious space is also a political space. The organization of the site according to specific aims – hierarchical display of the buildings, etc. –, the deposit of votive offerings, and the erection of honorific statues, are only few examples of this politicization. The case of honorific monuments is noteworthy. During the Hellenistic period – and also Roman times – at least 71 statues were erected in different spots with close attention paid to the visibility of the monument to its spectators. The goal of this visibility was not purely spatial, but also temporal. These statues were to

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<sup>304</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 546.

<sup>305</sup> Ceka, 1987, 135.

<sup>306</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 546 – 547.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibidem*, 547.

<sup>308</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 58 – 59.

<sup>309</sup> Cabanes, 1976, 547.



be gazed at and to impose themselves on the landscape, not just during the lifetime of the dedicant but for a long time.<sup>310</sup> Spatio-temporal memory, thus, helps legitimize the dominant ideologies, simultaneously hiding social inequalities and reproducing power discourses.<sup>311</sup>

Most of the figures seem to have been martial in nature, depicting infantry and cavalry. It is possible that they all depicted real people, perhaps members of the ruling class or the aristocracy. Although only four inscriptions are preserved, it is reasonable to assume that all the pedestals bore at least one inscription memorializing the reason for the statue. Two federal entities appear in the inscriptions discussed above, the *Koinon* of the Bylliones and the Epirote *Koinon*. Moreover, these inscriptions suggest that identifying the *ethnos* of the honoree – not just “Epirote” but also, for example, “Molossian, Kuestian” – was of great importance. Since the material remains show Macedonian elements in some statues, it is quite probable that the neighboring kingdom erected some honorific statues in the sanctuary for a similar purpose.

Is it possible to deduce that proximity to the temples and treasuries of the sanctuary would have been of major importance to the people portrayed in those statues? Would this imply that other sculptures were less important? The datings of the pedestals given by Katsikoudis – which does not include all of them –, does not follow a chronological order. In other words, the dedicant could choose the location of the statue. If hierarchy was an important factor in the dedication of statues, one may think that the pedestals closer to the temples and treasuries were dedicated to and by people of greater standing, such as kings and, later, rulers of the *Koinon*. Unfortunately, the only available written testimony consists of the four inscriptions on the three pedestals discussed above. All of them were found to the east of the *bouleuterion* and, presumably, not in the most prominent location. None of the inscriptions discussed above mention a leader, which would have been clearly indicated.

Manumissions and honorary decrees such as *proxenia*, *politeia* or *ateleia*, are other kind of material evidence for civil affairs. Several of these documents are attested from the 4th century onwards, including the *Koinon* period. Dodona continued being a locus for this sort of events.

Offerings, on the contrary, become less frequent during this time, in line with the general trend of the Hellenistic Age. The most significant among the ones found are a clay lamp with a mask in the shape of Silenus,<sup>312</sup> and a second century statuette of Poseidon.<sup>313</sup> Moreover, as explained before, dedication of female heads spanned the entire Hellenistic period. It is highly probable that some of them correspond to the period of the *Koinon*.

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<sup>310</sup> Criado, 1993, 45.

<sup>311</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 39.

<sup>312</sup> MA At. No. 1159 (2nd cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 207 and 373, F326.

<sup>313</sup> MA At. No. 268 (2nd cent.): Dieterle, 2007, 199 and 368, F124.

As regards pottery, it is surprising that archaeological reports barely mention them. One may think that the importance of other findings led to its exclusion from the reports. But the pottery of the Helladic Period has a remarkable presence in the current bibliography.<sup>314</sup> As it would be counter-intuitive to not include ceramics in studies of the following centuries, it is probable that very little pottery, except for the few clay votives already described, were found at the site for the period under discussion.

### 3.4.2 Numismatics, Epirus, and Dodona

The significance and influence of the shrine on the entirety of Epirus is obvious if we take a look at the motifs rendered in some of the issues attributed to the Alliance and the *Koinon*. For the period of the *Symmachia*, the metrological study of Papaevangelou-Genakos revises the analysis of Franke and distinguishes two phases, from 331/330 to ca. 300, with a single group of coins (Gruppe I); and from ca. 300 to 233/231 with eleven different issues. In the latter, four of issues are dated to ca. 300, four more to the reign of Pyrrhus I, and the other three to the period that spans from 280/270 to 235. All of these issues are in bronze. Moreover, at the beginning of the first phase there was a short production of Chaonian coins with two groups, but the *ethnos* stopped producing their own coinage thereafter.<sup>315</sup> The following section will not examine the entire catalogue of numismatic production, but focus on those series with Dodonaean types.

One might notice similarities between the first issue struck and the previous Molossian issues. The iconography represents a charging bull with the inscription ΑΠΕΙ-ΡΩΤΑΝ below on the obverse and a thunderbolt nestled in a laurel wreath on the reverse.<sup>316</sup> The thunderbolt, Zeus' weapon of choice, may refer to the sanctuary of Dodona, while the bull, a new type in Epirote numismatics, is probably connected to stockbreeding and could possibly be related to some of the votive offerings dedicated at the shrine in previous centuries.

Franke could not register a later finding from Cassope; it is a coin depicting the head of Zeus on one side and a four-horse chariot on the other with the legend ΑΠΕΙ-ΡΩΤΑΝ. It dates to before 330, partly due to the similarity with the head of Zeus on the silver staters of Alexander I. Oikonomidou-Karamesini dated it to after 342, during Alexander I's rule.<sup>317</sup> This piece does not offer more information regarding Dodona apart from the appearance of Zeus, which actually is not a definitive link. It is important, however, to the debate around the origin of the Alliance, whether it came


<sup>314</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 154.

<sup>315</sup> Franke, 1961, 116–133; Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 136–141 (with a slight modification of some of the groups and datings).

<sup>316</sup> Franke, 1961, 125, Gr. I.

<sup>317</sup> Oikonomidou-Karamesini, 1984, 39–42; Meyer, 2013, 67, n. 173.

about during or after the reign of Alexander I. Its mere existence may offer proof enough that the Molossians minted both coins with the ethnics ΜΟΛΟΣΣΩΝ and ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ.

The second coinage phase comes from the period of the Alliance and is characterized by the employment of a new monetary system, the Kerkyraean, which differs from the Attic bronze weight standard of the 4th century.<sup>318</sup> On the first set of four issues, dated to ca. 300, we find the type most clearly linked to Dodona, an eagle perched atop a rock with the legend ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ on the right side of the obverse and an oak with three doves on the reverse.<sup>319</sup> There is no doubt that this is the sacred tree of the sanctuary with the famous birds, whose names are identical to those of the priestesses of the shrine, the peleïades. Two anthropomorphic figures can be interpreted in the same vein. One is a female head with a crown on one side and a seated dog on the other. Although only one piece of this series has been catalogued and the preserved image does not allow a clear identification, Franke wonders whether she might be Dione, Aphrodite, or Artemis.<sup>320</sup> It certainly would not be surprising that the goddess represented is Dione, the second most important deity at Dodona. The scarcity of evidence, however, makes this impossible to confirm. The case of Zeus, whose head appears on the obverse of the four strikes from the reign of Pyrrhus is far more certain and is bolstered by the presence of a thunderbolt framed by an oak wreath on the reverse. This series is accompanied by the Epirote ethnicon-monogram  or the alternative versions, Α-Π / ΑΠΕΙΡΩΤΑΝ.<sup>321</sup> We can see a similar iconography in two of the issues minted between 280/270 and 235.<sup>322</sup> Zeus' role as the tutelary god of Dodona presumably had a strong influence on the selection of this type. The same could be said of the thunderbolt and the eagle. Finally, the presence of the oak wreath in these six issues, as well as in another struck ca. 300 with the thunderbolt nestled inside and the head of Athena on the obverse,<sup>323</sup> points us once again to the sacred tree.

We can extract some conclusions from the twelve issues dating to the period of the Alliance. The representation of the oak with doves in one strike provides a definitive link with the sanctuary of Dodona, as surely does the depiction of the oak wreath in five cases. The case of Zeus is more complex. According to the sequence defined by Franke and revised by Papaevangelou-Genakos, seven series bear the head of the god. The number of Zeus series increases if we take into account other symbols associated with this divinity, especially nine issues with thunderbolts – usually surrounded by an oak crown – and one with an eagle. To assume that all these types are directly related to Dodona is somewhat risky. As Tzouvara-Souli convinc-

<sup>318</sup> Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 138 – 141.

<sup>319</sup> Franke, 1961, 129, Gr. V.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibidem*, 129, Gr. VI.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibidem*, 129, Gr. II, III, and VII-IX.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibidem*, 129, Gr. X-XI.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibidem*, 128, Gr. IV.

ingly argues, the cult of Zeus encompassed all of Epirus.<sup>324</sup> However, it is worth pointing out that the sanctuary was the focus of this religious trend, with people from the region – and further abroad – consulting the oracle over the centuries. It is clear from the numismatic evidence that Epirotes identified themselves with Zeus. The fact that he was the tutelary god of the most important shrine in Epirus might have led to his depiction in the majority of these issues. The female head on one of the issues is still problematic. Athena can be easily recognized by her Corinthian helmet in one issue from ca. 300<sup>325</sup> and Artemis appears in the last series, minted between ca. 250 and 235.<sup>326</sup> The state of preservation of the latter is not good, but the figure appears to be sporting a quiver. None of these attributes accompany the female head, which wears only a ribbon. The identification of this figure with Dione or Aphrodite is, therefore, more likely.

Before moving ahead, there is a special group to consider. Just as Alexander I did when he went to Italy, Pyrrhus also minted special coins in gold, silver, and bronze during his campaign in the West. Among these iconographic types there are a few examples of Epirote and, more specifically, of Dodonaean origin. The most representative case is that of a silver tetradrachm depicting Zeus with an oak crown in the obverse and an enthroned Dione on the reverse. The oak wreath appears in other series in different contexts, as does the thunderbolt.<sup>327</sup> The connection between the oak and Zeus, the most powerful god, is clear on one of the golden coins. The obverse bears the head of Athena, and the reverse shows a winged and veiled Nike carrying a trophy in her left arm and an oak wreath in the other.<sup>328</sup> In this way, with one of the main issues that he minted in Sicily, Pyrrhus demonstrates his desire and hope for victory, using, among other things, his bond with Zeus via the sacred tree of Dodona.

The period of the Epirote *Koinon* is marked by the preservation of some types and a few innovations. The federal state minted coins in silver and bronze following the Kerkyraean standard. There are also issues of two Epirote *ethne* – Athamanians (220 – 185) and Chaonians (171 – 168) – and the city of Cassope (234 – 195), which reflect a certain degree of autonomy during the time.<sup>329</sup>

The *Koinon* minted four issues in silver of descending values, in which we can see Dodonaean elements. The first group consisted of staters with the heads of Zeus and Dione on one side and a charging bull bound by an oak wreath on the

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<sup>324</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 2004.

<sup>325</sup> Franke, 1961, 128, Gr. IV (ca. 330/329 to ca. 300 in the German work; dating modified by Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 138).

<sup>326</sup> *Ibidem*, 128, Gr. XII.

<sup>327</sup> Borba Florenzano, 1992, 208 – 212.

<sup>328</sup> Lualdi, 2017, 19.

<sup>329</sup> Franke, 1961, 134 – 217; Diez, 1988 – 1989, 82 – 1965 (only the silver coinage); Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 141 – 144.

other.<sup>330</sup> The second series is of half staters depicting Zeus alone on the obverse and a thunderbolt in an oak wreath on the reverse. The third staters also have the heads of Zeus and Dione and a thunderbolt nestled in an oak wreath. Finally, the sixth staters portray the head of Zeus and the thunderbolt in an oak wreath on the obverse and reverse, respectively.<sup>331</sup> The coins usually bear the legend ΑΙΙΕΙ-ΡΩΤΑΝ, the ethnic's variants, such as Α-ΙΙ, or monograms.

Archaeologists have found a minor amount of bronze pieces, although enough for scholars to distinguish five groups.<sup>332</sup> The connections with Dodona are fewer in this case. The divine couple of Zeus and Dione is also present, once again with the thunderbolt and oak wreath, in one issue.<sup>333</sup> The same iconography on the reverse, but with Zeus alone on the obverse, is the type of three groups.<sup>334</sup> Dione is also depicted alone, with a tripod set in a laurel wreath on the back, in one strike.<sup>335</sup> This last depiction is intriguing. Just as with the coinage of Alexander I, where the tripod appears together with an eagle and a laurel leaf, one might automatically tie the iconography to Dodona, since tripods seem to have been an important element of oracular consultation. The fact that it is surrounded by a laurel wreath, instead of an oak one, however, should give us pause, since it might point to Delphi, the main sanctuary of Apollo, where both laurel and tripods were important. Given the remarkable number of icons in Molossian and Epirote coinage linked to Dodona, including the issue depicting a sacred oak with three doves, it is conceivable that the tripod on this issue points to Dodona. Nevertheless, it is not possible to confirm this hypothesis and the fact that the cult of Apollo was also important in Epirus, especially in the ancient Corinthian colonies, makes arguing this case more difficult. Aside from the deities discussed above, Artemis and Herakles also appear on coinage.<sup>336</sup>

It is interesting to note that many coins of the Epirote *Koinon* bear the names of the officials in charge of minting the currency, what Leschhorn calls *Beamtennamen*. Leschhorn, and Franke before him, have studied the remarkable variety of people who appear here.<sup>337</sup> A fascinating tie to the sanctuary of Dodona, albeit for a later period, right after the conquest of Epirus by the Romans, is given to us by this practice. Production of Epirote coinage continued during this phase and a few issues

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**330** Dione wears some kind of wreath or veil. The fact that the female head stands in one of the series of the Alliance and wears a ribbon might be a connection between both representations. Although still uncertain, this would support the idea of identifying Dione in the coinage of the *Symmachia*.

**331** Franke, 1961, 161–195, Gr. I–IV, ordered as didrachmae, drachmae, third staters, and sixth staters.

**332** Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 143.

**333** Franke, 1961, 195–196, Gr. V.

**334** *Ibidem*, 212–215, Gr. IX–XI.

**335** *Ibidem*, 196–201, Gr. VI.

**336** *Ibidem*, 201–217, Gr. VII–VIII (Artemis) and XIII (Herakles).

**337** Franke, 1961, 156–157 and Übersichtstabelle 2; Leschhorn, 2013.

yield the legend ΜΕΝΕΔΗΜΟΣ ΙΕΡΕΥΣ ΑΡΓΕΑΔΗΣ, written in various ways.<sup>338</sup> We may surmise from the text that this Menedemos belonged to the Macedonian family of the Argeads and was a priest in the sanctuary of Dodona.

### 3.4.3 Dodona – Molossian or Epirote religious capital?

Both the Molossian kingdom and the Epirote *Koinon* are likely to have had capitals. States usually have at least one place that acts as a core for the control and organization of the activities of the territory, holds meetings, and celebrates important events. In Molossia, scholars have usually designated Passaron as the capital,<sup>339</sup> based on a few references, although the evidence is far from definitive. This hypothesis is mainly based on an oath that kings had to perform after making a sacrifice in the shrine of Zeus Areios in Passaron, as Plutarch explains.<sup>340</sup> In another passage, Livy narrates the Roman conquest of the Molossian territory during the Third Macedonian War. Four settlements attempted to resist their attack – Passaron, Tekmon, Phylace, and Horreum.<sup>341</sup> All of them were finally defeated and the importance of Passaron is evident from the fragment. In none of these texts is Passaron explicitly mentioned as the capital, although it is the most probable one. Ambrakia too was prominent, at least during the rule of Pyrrhus, who established his royal court there.<sup>342</sup> The choice of Ambrakia, strategically located on the eponymous gulf, by Pyrrhus, who pursued international affairs energetically, seems quite justified.

Livy's reference concerns the period of the Epirote *Koinon*, which covered a larger territory. Is it possible that Passaron was the capital of the kingdom and after the emergence of the federal state a new center for the whole of Epirus emerged? The city of Gitana, in northwestern Epirus, has been proposed as the capital. The hypothesis, formulated by Preka-Alexandri,<sup>343</sup> is based primarily on two literary references. In the first Polybius relates how the consul Aulus Hostilius took shelter there, helped by a friend trying to prevent his capture.<sup>344</sup> In the second, consuls Marcius and Atilius held a meeting with the Epirote assembly at this site in 170.<sup>345</sup> Neither of these passages, however, talks explicitly about a capital, despite what Preka-Alexandri suggests. In these accounts Gitana is simply described as a place safe enough to avoid

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<sup>338</sup> Franke, 1961, 308–311; Leschhorn, 2013, 162. Betsiou, 2016, has presented a well-argued theory that dates these coins to the times of Julius Caesar, based on stylistic and metrological observations, as well as evidence for a Macedonian supporter of Caesar called Menedemos.

<sup>339</sup> Hammond, 1967, 576–577.

<sup>340</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 5, 5.

<sup>341</sup> Livy, 45, 26, 4.

<sup>342</sup> Polyb., 21, 30, 9; Livy, 38, 9, 13.

<sup>343</sup> Preka-Alexandri, 1999, 167.

<sup>344</sup> Polyb., 27, 16, 4–6.

<sup>345</sup> Livy, 42, 38, 1.

attack and a strategic location for meetings. Sources also refer to Phoenike in similar terms. The Chaonian city became quite powerful after the reign of Pyrrhus I<sup>346</sup> and, according to Polybius, was, in spite of being once plundered, almost impregnable.<sup>347</sup> Epirotes and Romans gathered here during the war between the Italics and Philip V on at least two occasions.<sup>348</sup> Although no ancient source gives the unequivocal denomination of capital to Phoenike, given its location, power and size, several scholars consider it to have played the role of headquarters.<sup>349</sup>

In short, it is uncertain whether any of these centers were the capital of the Epirote *Koinon*. A third possibility emerges here, though – Dodona. The hypothesis that identifies buildings E2 and O-01-02 as the *bouleuterion* and *prytaneion*, respectively, follows this line. On the one hand, there is no evidence in the literary sources that Dodona ever served as the capital, but the epigraphic material makes it clear that many non-oracular events took place on this sacred site from the 4th century onwards. This does not entail that Dodona was the capital, but it does enhance its significance as the main religious center of Epirus. Accordingly, Hatzopoulos and Mari regard Dodona as the national sanctuary of the territory, just as Dion was to Macedonia.<sup>350</sup> Other federal states in the Greek world furnish us with examples of sanctuaries functioning as the centers of power and assembly,<sup>351</sup> such as the shrine of Zeus Amarios in Sikyon was for the Achaian *Koinon*; Poseidon in Mykala for the Ioanian League; and Apollo in Thermo for the Aetolian *Koinon*.<sup>352</sup>

It may be that Dodona was such a site for the Epirote *Koinon*, and perhaps even served as the capital.<sup>353</sup> Its location, however, far inland, might have posed logistical problems for communication with the communities of the federal state and the organization of other special events, such as meetings with officials of other states. In my opinion, Phoenike is better suited to the role of federal capital of the *Koinon*, whereas Dodona is the most likely candidate for the religious capital. There is no doubt that it was the main sanctuary in Epirus and a common gathering place for all the inhabitants of the territory. If the theory I propose in this book is right, it was also the shrine where the most prominent *ethne*, and later the *Koinon*, built their treasuries, as a way to manifest and reinforce their presence in the site. Moreover, as Pascual suggests, we should not discard the possibility that Dodona was at

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<sup>346</sup> Gjongecaj, 2004, 169.

<sup>347</sup> Polyb., 2, 6, 8.

<sup>348</sup> Polyb., 16, 27, 4; Livy, 29, 12, 10–16.

<sup>349</sup> Scullard, 1945, 61; Cabanes, 1976, 97–99; Pascual, 2018, 85–87.

<sup>350</sup> Hatzopoulos and Mari, 2004, 508–509.

<sup>351</sup> Although not always, as Buraselis explains (2013, esp. 181).

<sup>352</sup> McInerney, 2013, 467 and 478.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibidem*, 473.



the same time the main meeting place for the Molossian *ethnos*, since material remains evince a major Molossian influence on the sanctuary.<sup>354</sup>

### 3.5 167 BCE – Rome conquers Epirus

The Roman army led by Lucius Emilius Paulus defeated Perseus in 167. Those who had supported the Macedonians were punished. Among these were some areas of Epirus, especially Molossia and southern Thesprotia, which suffered systematic plunder.<sup>355</sup> The result, narrated by many ancient authors, and with the most detail by Plutarch, was the destruction of seventy cities and the enslavement of 150,000 people.<sup>356</sup> Although the figure sounds a little excessive, it is true that a significant percentage of the Epirote population was transferred to Italic areas, as can be seen in Varro's *De res rustica*.<sup>357</sup> Ziolkowski connects this with a depletion of the labor force in Italy due to a plague that devastated some regions from 175–174.<sup>358</sup> Over decades scholars have attempted to identify evidence of damage or population decrease in Epirote settlements, but recent investigations suggest that these conclusions may be wrong and that signs of damage in some settlements might belong to the Aetolian attack of 219.<sup>359</sup>

In any case, the Roman conquest of Epirus was a pivotal moment in the development of the region and led to the dissolution of the *Koinon*. In 147, after the failed revolt of Andriscus, Epirus and Illyria became part of the Roman province of Macedonia. The *Koinon* was reinstated under Roman control.<sup>360</sup> We can see the influence of this change in Dodona, where the activity decreased remarkably. Moreover, there is some evidence of destruction that may be due to the war. For example, the damage traceable in Building O-01-02 is thought to belong to this event.<sup>361</sup> The drastic change in the evolution of the sanctuary is the primary reason why this book maintains 167 as its chronological limit. The abandonment of the site took place many centuries later and the sacred landscape underwent many transformations throughout this period, especially with the construction of a basilica in Christian times. In the meantime, there were other significant episodes. As Piccinini summarizes, the Thracian attack in 88 BCE and the consequences of the victory of Octavianus in Actium in 31 BCE

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<sup>354</sup> Pascual, 2018, 54. He hints that it was the capital of the Molossian *Koinon*. This would follow the same reasoning as Hatzopoulos, for whom Passaron was the “royal capital” and Dodona the “national capital” (2013, 170).

<sup>355</sup> Meyer, 2013, 133.

<sup>356</sup> Polyb. 30, 15; Plut., *Aem.* 29; Livy, 45, 34, 1–6; Str. 7, 7, 3; App. *Ill.* 9.

<sup>357</sup> Varro, *Rust.* 1, 17, 5.

<sup>358</sup> Ziolkowski, 1986, 76–80.

<sup>359</sup> Bowden, 2009, 167.

<sup>360</sup> Gravani, 2001, p. 140.

<sup>361</sup> Dakaris *et al.*, 1999, 156.



and the founding of Nikopolis entailed serious alterations in Dodona and Epirus. During the Augustan period we can find material evidence that shows that Dodona was still active.<sup>362</sup> But the fact that there are no more new noteworthy buildings during the Roman period apart from the basilica, shows a different phase in the history of the place, still a religious site, although no longer so important. In short, the relevance and function of the site took a dramatic turn in 167 and Dodona under Roman rule would never be the same.

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<sup>362</sup> Piccinini, 2013b.

## 4 Cults in Dodona and how the oracle functioned

### 4.1 Introduction

The activity and development of a sanctuary depends on the way religion is practiced by the community that uses it. One must take into account, for instance, the relative presence of religion in daily life, the extent to which the calendar and official events were organized according to religion, the relevance of rituals and the influence of contacts with neighboring regions. The goal of this book is to examine the space of Dodona in its physical and symbolic dimensions and to understand the sanctuary as a landscape built with purpose where any changes through the centuries are linked to a variety of strategies framed in different contexts. In order to see this evolution, I will employ a diachronic perspective. Doing so requires careful examination of the sources. These are neither perfect nor complete and it is often the case that fragmented references and lacunae hamper the scholar's reconstruction of a case of study. In Dodona, sources are scarce and even contradictory, especially in the ancient testimony. Material remains can be also unreliable. For example, the presence of a Herakles statuette does not necessarily mean that the hero was worshipped there. These problems and their ramifications will become more evident throughout this chapter.

In this chapter I will present my perspective on the cultic development of the sanctuary at Dodona and its religious overlap with other Greek areas. Persistence and change, statism and dynamism, these are the realities that this study considers in an attempt to show how different elements of Dodona endured while others were modified, suppressed or incorporated. Religion, we have to remember, seeks to appear conservative, unadulterated, and autochthonous. But religion too is subject to societal flux, even if this may not be immediately evident.<sup>1</sup> Rites change because the society that performs them also evolves.<sup>2</sup> A cult might have a long and uninterrupted existence, but experience changes in its rites along the way. Similarly, a site may act as a religious space for centuries or millennia, yet host different ritual practices that evolve and change over that time.<sup>3</sup> It is precisely because these changes take place so slowly that it is often so difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint the exact starting point of any given tradition.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, while one may see patterns that appear more or less stable, we should be cautious in assuming stability, especially when “new traditions” are formed so as to appear ancient.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brandt, 2012, 146.

<sup>2</sup> Chaniotis, 2002, 43.

<sup>3</sup> Chaniotis, 2009, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Van Nijf and Williamson, 2015, 97.

<sup>5</sup> Hobsbawm, 1983, 5.

This chapter will study the changes and modifications that took place in the religious sphere in Dodona, with special focus on the personnel that worked there, the cults and the oracle's function. Dynamism is evident in all of these areas. I will also analyze the different rituals that took place in the sanctuary, as well as the site's connections with other parts of Greces. In some cases, it is possible to see remnants of a seemingly common past, often enhanced for specific reasons in later times; in other cases the contacts appear to have been established more recently but an attempt was made to make them look more archaic. In brief, this chapter will set Dodona in the context of the Greek world and show how the sanctuary extended far beyond the Epirote frontiers.

## 4.2 Priests and priestesses – Selloi and peleïades<sup>6</sup>

Ancient literary accounts are our main source of information about the personnel of the shrine. The few references that mention it discuss two different groups, the selloi and peleïades, without offering a chronological account of the offices and their development. The *σelloί* seem to have been the first college of priests in Dodona. A passage in the *Iliad* mentions that they did not wash their feet and were accustomed to lie on the ground.<sup>7</sup> At certain point in time, unknown to us, a second collective was incorporated, the priestesses called peleïades – *πέλειαι* or *πελειάδες*, literally “doves”.<sup>8</sup> The group was probably added at a later date, although its absence in the *Iliad* should in no way be taken as direct evidence that they did not yet exist. The peleïades do, however, appear later on, in the work of Herodotus, and are described as the personnel of the oracle. Does this mean, as Parke suggests, that the selloi were no longer active at the time of Herodotus or that their prestige had dwindled in some way?<sup>9</sup>

There are three important references concerning this aspect. First, Pindar, who dedicated at least four paeans to Dodona,<sup>10</sup> in one of which he mentions the *Ἑλλῶν*, i.e., the (s)elloi.<sup>11</sup> The poet may have been *proxenos* of the Molossian royal court and, if so, we might assume that he knew Dodona.<sup>12</sup> In his *Against Meidias*, delivered in 350, Demosthenes recites oracles to enhance his arguments, one of them from Dodona: “To the people of the Athenians the prophet of Zeus announ-

<sup>6</sup> A more complete account is rendered in Chapinal-Heras (2017).

<sup>7</sup> Hom., *Il.* 16, 234.

<sup>8</sup> Bonnechere, 2007a, 155–156.

<sup>9</sup> Parke, 1967, 55.

<sup>10</sup> Pind., *Fr.* 57, 58, 59, and 60.

<sup>11</sup> Pind., *Fr.* 59.

<sup>12</sup> On this topic, see Hornblower (2004, 178–181) and Kittelä (2013, 39).

ces.”<sup>13</sup> Because the orator refers to a man and seems to quote a real oracle, I think it is safe to assume that there were still selloi in his time. The last clear piece of evidence is numismatic. The name of a priest called Menedemos, from the Argead family, is attested in a few issues of coins minted in Dodona during the Roman period. The legend on the coins read ΜΕΝΕΔΗΜΟΣ ΙΕΡΕΥΣ ΑΡΓΕΑΔΗΣ.<sup>14</sup> It is quite possible that Menedemos himself financed the issue of these coins with his name.<sup>15</sup>

Other sources do not offer an obvious solution to the question of the selloi's prominence. Some of them speak of the selloi in an apparent effort to strengthen the archaic character of the oracle,<sup>16</sup> alluding to the Homeric reference.<sup>17</sup> Strabo, on the other hand, states that the selloi were originally in charge of prophetic activity, but, when Dione was fixed as the partner of Zeus and her cult was firmly established, a group of three old women took over that role<sup>18</sup> and augured according to the flight of three doves.<sup>19</sup> The peleïades as the sole or main personnel in Dodona appear in just a few authors, like Herodotus, who refers to the mythical foundation of the oracle, supposedly linked to the one of Zeus/Amon in Egyptian Thebes.<sup>20</sup> Ephorus narrates the murder of a priestess at Dodona, explaining the tradition of the annual *τριποδηφορία*, in which a tripod is carried from Boiotia to the shrine.<sup>21</sup> Some works mention both selloi and peleïades, especially Philostratus, who describes the tasks of each group.<sup>22</sup> His reference, however, seems to be a mere compilation of different stories concerning the oracle and should be given less authority.

From the evidence discussed above, especially Strabo's account, we may surmise that the selloi were the first personnel at Dodona and that, at an indeterminate point in time, the peleïades were incorporated into sanctuary activity.<sup>23</sup> Herodotus confirms that priestesses were already active during his time, and, in fact, enhances the antiquity of the female college. Even though this is surely intentional, since he proclaims Dodona the oldest sanctuary of the Greek world,<sup>24</sup> we can accept the reference as reliable. As I mentioned above, the absence of the peleïades in the Homeric poems, where only the selloi appear, does not by itself mean that there were no priestesses at all in the early Archaic period. Nonetheless, archaeology suggests that the activity

13 Dem., 21, 53; ὁ τοῦ Διὸς σημαίνει ἐν Δωδώνῃ... Although there is no word for “prophet” here, the employment of “ὁ” is the proof.

14 Franke, 1961, 308–311. There are different versions, with the words written in distinct order on the head and the back. For the reinterpretation of the dating, as noted above, see Betsiou, 2016.

15 Leschhorn, 2013, 162.

16 Cineas, *FGrHis* 603 F 2, when he calls them “pelasgians”.

17 Alex. Aph., *In Mete.* 352.

18 Str., 7, 7, 9.

19 Str., Fr. 7, 1.

20 Hdt., 2, 54–57.

21 Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F119. Cf. Str., 9, 2, 4.

22 Philost., *Im.* 2, 33.

23 Rachet, 1962, 88 and Denis, 2009, 421, n. 1780.

24 Hdt., 2, 52, 2.

of the sanctuary during this period was limited and it seems reasonable to think that only one group was required to carry out the day-to-day functions of the cult and oracle. There is a two to three century gap between the *Iliad* and Herodotus, time enough for the shrine to grow and develop new tasks that required new personnel. It is worth asking whether the creation of the female college entailed the abolition of the male one. Quantin does not think that the one replaced the other<sup>25</sup> and the accounts of Pindar and Demosthenes, as well as the coin issue of Menedemos, evince that both selloi and peleïades cooperated until at least the beginning of the Roman period.

To summarize, I support the hypothesis that the shrine was originally staffed only by priests and grew to include priestesses. Both groups coexisted for centuries, until the selloi lost prominence due to the decrease in Dodona's importance. This would have happened at some point during the Roman period, sometime after the Republican phase, since the coins of the priest Menedemos probably date to the times of Julius Caesar.<sup>26</sup> This assumption is based on the fact that most references to selloi in the accounts of later authors only mention their particular way of life and seem to be citing the passage in the *Iliad*. The main reason for the establishment of the peleïades may have been the rise of pilgrimage to the site throughout the Archaic and Classical Ages. The need to better manage shrine activities would have required more personnel. There are many Greek cases of both female and male religious bodies at the same site, as is the case at Delphi.<sup>27</sup> What is more difficult to explain is the creation of two separate groups, instead of an increase in the number of selloi. The growth of the cult of Dione, partner of Zeus and present in most fully preserved oracular consultations, was likely the main reason. One may suppose that if selloi and peleïades coincided, their functions would have complemented each other. Indeed, this seems to have been the case. Ephorus explains that, after a tragic event, the oracles for the Boiotians were transmitted only by the selloi, whereas the priestesses were in charge of everything else.<sup>28</sup> Although not conclusive, this reference gives us an idea of the possible ways of organizing two colleges at the same shrine.

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<sup>25</sup> Quantin, 1999a, 74.

<sup>26</sup> Betsiou, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, 2014, 34–35.

<sup>28</sup> Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F119 (= Str., 9, 2, 4).

## 4.3 Gods in Dodona

### 4.3.1 Zeus *Naios*

Zeus was the tutelary god of the sanctuary. His cult is well attested across all of Epirus, where he was very popular.<sup>29</sup> His most common epithet in Dodona was *Naios*,<sup>30</sup> the exact meaning of which is still debated by scholars. In a study concerning this topic, Cook noted the difficulty of the etymology –it could mean ‘the god of ships’, ‘the god of the temple’, or ‘the god who dwells’.<sup>31</sup> Although there are oracular consultations dealing with sea travel and the settling of colonies,<sup>32</sup> Dodona is too far from the coast to for ‘naval’ to be the main meaning of the epithet. We may, accordingly, discard the first possibility. Hammond has stated that none of the meanings proposed above are consistent with the cult of Zeus in Dodona as linked to natural elements.<sup>33</sup> He has suggested that Zeus was the divinity of a sacred fountain or spring near the religious site, or perhaps of the underground streams of the valley.<sup>34</sup> Lhôte, more recently, has argued in favor of “the god who dwells”, with Zeus as a chthonic deity.<sup>35</sup> A more detailed approach is offered by Trümpy,<sup>36</sup> who connects *Naios* with the Mycenaean term *na-wi-jo*, attested in Pylos.<sup>37</sup> The result is the word *ναFός* (/na<sup>h</sup>wios/, “temple”), a better fit than /nawios/ (‘for the ship’). The hypothesized “god of the temple” implies the existence of a building for its cult when we have seen that the first *naiskos* was built rather late, so “god who dwells” might be applied here in a more generic way, including, perhaps, in relation to the sacred tree. There is no certain solution, but this last possibility seems to be more consistent with archaeological evidence.

The first mention of Zeus *Naios* in the oracular epigraphy dates to the mid-5th century. The piece, where we can read Ζε<Ϝ> / Νᾱῖε, records the question of a Boiotian concerning the possibility of going to Sybaris,<sup>38</sup> probably after the colony was

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29 A good synthesis of this is Tzouvara-Souli (2004).

30 Others registered in epigraphy are Bouleos, Olympios, Bronteos, and Eukleos (*LOD* 142). In literature we see also, not surprisingly, *Dodonaïos* (Steph.Byz., Δωδώνη).

31 Cook, 1903, 178.

32 For example, *DVC* 167A.

33 Hammond, 1967, 39, n. 2.

34 Rachet also supports this interpretation (1962, 90). A similar reasoning has Zolotnikova, for whom the epithet Νᾱός, with the extended form of Νᾱῖός, can be interpreted as meaning of “the water flow” and would be linked to the river Acheloos (2019, 104). However, despite the suggesting hypothesis, in her paper Zolotnikova analyzes the Indo-European roots of Dodona, something that is still difficult to prove. We need more data concerning the Prehistoric remains of the place to be able to confirm its religious role even before the Late Bronze Age.

35 Lhôte, 2006, 407–420. Also Quantin, who suggests a connection with shepherds, since they had a winter “residence” there each year (2007, 182).

36 Trümpy, 1986, 40–41. Supported also by Mylonopoulos (2006, 198).

37 Jn 829,3.

38 *LOD* 133.

destroyed and refounded as Thuri in 446/5–444/3. The reference to Zeus Naios does not appear in this specific consultation, but in another on the same tablet. Since oracular consultation usually date to a similar period—with at most decades of difference—we might fix it this attestation to the same period. Zeus without the epithet appears already in a plaque from the 6th century.<sup>39</sup>

It is not clear whether Zeus was the first god worshipped in Dodona. Scholars have conventionally thought that there was originally some kind of female chthonic cult in the Bronze Age.<sup>40</sup> If true, this cult would not have ceased because of Zeus's coming. It may have remained, in fact, transformed into the cult of Dione.<sup>41</sup> The first unquestionable religious materials of Dodona are warrior figurines dating to 8th century. It is uncertain whether they were offerings to Zeus. Another possibility is to link them to a martial deity. Since the main objects from the Bronze Age that indicate religious activity are axes, this hypothesis seems reasonable. The prayer of Achilles, the warrior hero par excellence, to Zeus of Dodona in book 16 of the *Iliad*, could reflect this.

It is difficult to discern the reason Zeus was – or became – the tutelary god of Dodona. Some scholars have suggested that the Elean settlements on the shores of Epirus played a significant role.<sup>42</sup> Contact with the territory where the sanctuary of Olympia stood could have led to the establishment of that cult in Dodona. However, how much influence could a foreign population and its *apoikiai* have had on the hinterland? Moreover, was there actually Elean colonization in the area? I will return to the relationship between Dodona and Olympia later in this chapter. Let us now consider the theory of Elean *apoikiai*.

The only passage that mentions them comes from Demosthenes, who mentions Boucheta, Pandosia, and Elateia.<sup>43</sup> Some scholars suggest that the first of these was founded ca. 700<sup>44</sup> and they relate its foundation to the first signs of a cult of Zeus in Dodona.<sup>45</sup> A recent paper published by Domínguez challenges this theory,<sup>46</sup> arguing that the theory is not very well supported by the archaeological remains, conceding, however, that numerous artifacts remain unpublished. Nevertheless, if that evidence exists, it is reasonable to assume that its significance would have prompted archaeologists to share those findings. Moreover, Theopompus mentions the sites, along-

<sup>39</sup> Dakaris *et al.*, 2013, 414B (“...Ζεῦ...”).

<sup>40</sup> Farnell, 1977, 7–8; Foss, 1978, 127. For the debate concerning if this place functioned as a sanctuary before the Archaic Age, see Dakaris, 1971a (supports) and Tartaron, 2004 (rejects).

<sup>41</sup> Séchan and Lévêque, 1966, 79.

<sup>42</sup> Dakaris, 1971a, 32–33.

<sup>43</sup> Dem., 7, 32: ...τὰς δ' ἐν Κασσωπία τρεῖς πόλεις, Πανδοσίαν καὶ Βούχετα καὶ Ἐλάτειαν, Ἡλείων ἀποικίας... In Theopomp., *FGrHis* 115 F206 (228) we see these three sites, located in the region of Cassope, but without any mention to their colonial nature: ...τάδε ἐν Κασσωπία τρεῖς πόλεις, Πανδοσίαν καὶ Βούχετα καὶ Ἐλάτειαν...

<sup>44</sup> Hammond, 1967, 427.

<sup>45</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Domínguez, 2015.

side Bitia, without calling them colonies.<sup>47</sup> With regard to the Demosthenes passage, Domínguez argues that it could be a conscious identity mechanism employed by the inhabitants of this region, who were trying to find a connection to the ancient tradition of colonization. It is thus highly unlikely that the Eleans founded *apoikiai*. The phenomenon would have started with the Corinthians. Of course, once such colonization began, there is no doubt that commerce and traffic among the new settlements and the hinterland would have increased, as did pilgrimage to Dodona. The cult of Zeus in Dodona, therefore, might have had a local origin.

With regard to the other epithets, it is worth pointing out that Zeus Bouleos shows up in a marble block belonging to Building E2,<sup>48</sup> which supports the identification of the structure as the *bouleuterion*. Another oracular consultation containing the epithet is dated to the 4th-3rd centuries,<sup>49</sup> a time when the *bouleuterion* is supposed to have been active.

#### 4.3.2 Other cults

There is no doubt that **Dione**, wife of Zeus in Dodona, also attested in the Homeric poems,<sup>50</sup> was the second most important divinity in the sanctuary. It was thought that worship of the goddess preserved the ancient chthonic cult of Dodona. However, this theory is usually refuted in modern scholarship,<sup>51</sup> since it is based on an outdated view of prehistoric societies that supposedly followed a matriarchal model with Mother Earth as the main cult.<sup>52</sup>

Lévêque identifies Dione with the Mycenaean term di-wi-ja, the female version of di-we, i. e., Zeus, who appears on Pylos Tn 316.<sup>53</sup> The name itself, Διώνη, derives from that of the Olympian god. Another interpretation sees her as “the dove goddess”, which is attested precisely on the same tablet – *pe-re-82* = *Peleia*. There may even be a connection to a Theban document mentioning a *pe-re-wi-jo*, that is to say, “priestess of the dove goddess”.<sup>54</sup> Although this last argument is disputable, the importance of doves in Dodona makes the theory feasible. It is thus very likely that Dione, the birds and the peleiades were probably connected,<sup>55</sup> as the story of Herodotus concerning the foundation of the oracle suggests.<sup>56</sup> However, in Greek religion

<sup>47</sup> Theopomp., *FGrHis* 115 F206 (228).

<sup>48</sup> C18.

<sup>49</sup> *LOD* 142.

<sup>50</sup> Hom., *Il.* 5, 370–372.

<sup>51</sup> Iriarte Goñi, 2000, 96–97; Georgoudi, 2002, 113–119 (in general); Quantin, 1992, 181 (focused on Dodona).

<sup>52</sup> Rossi, 2009, 280; Kindt, 2012, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Lévêque, 1997, 155.

<sup>54</sup> Aravantinos, Godart and Sacconi, 1995, 838.

<sup>55</sup> Lawler, 1942, 352.

<sup>56</sup> Hdt., 2, 54–57.



at large the dove was most commonly linked to Aphrodite<sup>57</sup> and many scholars tie the animal to her cult, as in the case of Aphrodite Pandemos in Athens, Aphrodisias in Caria, Corinth, Sikyon, and Cassope.<sup>58</sup>

On a remarkable number of oracular consultations, Dione is invoked just after Zeus (Naios). This prominence convinces me that there was a specific structure, a temple, for her worship. If my hypothesis is right, this was Building Z. It is also of note that some coins minted by the Epirote *Koinon* depicted both Zeus and Dione together.<sup>59</sup> The question of votives is a little more problematic since the goddess was, interestingly, not supposed to have received offerings. However, it is probably a mistake to assume that Aphrodite was the recipient of the female statuettes with doves on their laps and the female terracotta heads, since these objects are seen in sanctuaries of other goddesses. In the case of Dodona they seem destined primarily for Dione, although I would not discard the possibility of them being offerings to both deities at the same time.

If we keep the historical context in mind, there is a noteworthy reference in Hyperides's speech, *In Defence of Euxenippus*, in which the Attic orator denounces the excessive control that Olympias, who was Molossian, had over Dodona.<sup>60</sup> I have previously suggested that the temple of Dione (Z, not Γ or Θ) may be dated to this period, ca. 330. Moreover, some years ago, Cabanes noticed the strong participation of Olympias and Cleopatra in the cult of Dione.<sup>61</sup> Is it possible that they themselves ordered the erection of this temple? This is what Baslez theorizes,<sup>62</sup> though she does not expand the argument. One may conjecture that the power of Olympias and Cleopatra in their kingdom was remarkable. It is reasonable to think that they may have wished to demonstrate and reinforce this power by constructing a building for a cult in which they were so involved. This would have helped Olympias to counteract, or at least to control, the influence of Athens over Dodona, and, at the same time, strengthen her own policy.

The possible cult of **Aphrodite** in Dodona is also worthy of examination. The only real evidence of it is a small bronze wheel bearing an inscription dedicated to the goddess, a statuette of a woman holding an apple, and two oracular consultations where she is mentioned—although the questions are not directed to her.<sup>63</sup> Other materials conventionally linked to her, mainly the figurines of women with doves and the female heads discussed above, might have been votives for her moth-

<sup>57</sup> Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, 415–417.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, 415–416.

<sup>59</sup> Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 141–146.

<sup>60</sup> Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 26.

<sup>61</sup> Cabanes, 1999, 389–391.

<sup>62</sup> Baslez, 1999, 391.

<sup>63</sup> DVC 987B (end of the 5th cent.) and 3479a (mid 4th cent.).

er. It is very probable that all the objects on which a dove was depicted, as for instance a pin<sup>64</sup> and a statuette of a child,<sup>65</sup> were also dedicated to Dione.

This does not mean that Aphrodite was not worshipped in Dodona. When Pyrrhus fought in Italy, his contacts with Segesta might have brought him closer to the cult of Aphrodite Aeneadas.<sup>66</sup> The work of Virgil, in which Aeneas consults the oracle of Dodona might reflect this reality,<sup>67</sup> as does the reference of Dionysius of Halicarnassus one century earlier.<sup>68</sup> If this theory is correct, there could have been a cult to Aphrodite in the sanctuary, which would have been situated very close to Dione's, with whom she may have shared common offerings. It is not inconceivable that they could have also shared the same temple, building Z. In any case, a strong argument in support of a separate cult building is lacking.

Most scholars have supported the theory that **Herakles** also had a temple in Dodona, building A. The hero may be connected to Epirus in the *Iliad*, where he is described as having kidnapped Astyocheia of Ephyra after plundering various centers.<sup>69</sup> The poem mentions Ephyra on Selleeis, a river in Elis. Diodorus, however, mentions recounts the same myth in relation to the Thesprotian site and provides more details.<sup>70</sup> We can surmise that he was quoting an alternative version created in later times by Epirote Ephyraeans. A cult of Herakles is also attested in other sites, mainly Ambrakia.<sup>71</sup> In addition, Sophocles cites a consultation the hero made in Dodona.<sup>72</sup> There are a few material remains linked to Herakles in the sanctuary itself: reliefs depicting the fight against Apollo on a cuirass and the Hydra on a tympanum, both found in Building A; a couple of figurines of the hero; a small bronze mace;<sup>73</sup> and a fragment of a mirror with his figure.<sup>74</sup> The presence of these pieces, however, is not evidence enough to confirm the existence of a temple of Herakles, or even a proper cult. I suggest that these materials may have been connected to the Molossian *ethnos* through its mythical genealogy—Lanassa, the wife of the mythical Neoptolemus, was her descendant, as was Olympias, wife of Philip II, and Cleopatra, wife of Alexander I. The introduction of a cult of Herakles to highlight royal influence on the sanctuary might be also a possibility, but I consider it improbable.

The main argument for supporting a cult of **Apollo** in Dodona is the oracular consultation in which he appears, together with Zeus, Dione, and Themis.<sup>75</sup> His

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64 MA At. No. 69.

65 MA Io. No. 1371.

66 Dakaris, 1971a, 54. Actually, it was Eryx, a near city (Galinsky, 1969, 67).

67 Verg., *Aen.* 3, 462–469.

68 Dion.Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1, 51, 1.

69 Hom., *Il.* 2, 657–660.

70 Diod.Sic., 4, 36, 1.

71 Tzouvara-Souli, 2004, 527.

72 Soph., *Trach.* 1164–1172.

73 MA Io. No. 898 (unknown dating).

74 MA Io. No. 761 (4th cent.).

75 Dakaris, *Praktika* 1967, 49, No. 5.

name is also attested in more consultations recently published: *DVC* 224A, 565A, 2726A, and 2964B; perhaps also 1045A, 1299B, 2203B, and 3671. Among these, only the petition in 224A, which concerns a trial,<sup>76</sup> seems to be directed to the god; he is, in that instance, the only deity mentioned. Therefore, we have two consultations where Apollo is asked, both of them dated to the 4th century. It is also worth pointing out the 6th century figurines cited in the previous chapter, as well as the 5th century relief of his fight against Herakles for the tripod. The case for a cult of Apollo has stronger merits than those of other gods supposedly worshipped in Dodona, due particularly to the many oracular consultations mentioning him. The problem is that we cannot find analogies at other oracles, since the practice of writing questions down was almost unique to this place. As such, we do not know whether pilgrims to other sites ever petitioned gods other than the tutelary deity. The cult of Apollo was very important in Ambrakia<sup>77</sup> and in most of the Corinthian colonies in Epirus.<sup>78</sup> We also know that Agyieus was one of his epithets in Ambrakia and that it appears in the Molossian settlement of Horraion,<sup>79</sup> which was on the way to Dodona. A possible explanation is that the questions were made by people from these centers or who had a special bond with Apollo. The datings are important – the sculptures are from the 6th century, the cuirass is from the 5th and the two consultations date to the 4th. Only the relief from the tympanum tallies with the chronology of Building A, the supposed seat of his cult. The evidence leaves open the possibility that Apollo was worshipped at Dodona, although the main argument, his presence on the plaques, is so exceptional that they may have a different explanation – perhaps the influence of Corinthian colonies in the shore of Epirus, which came into increased contact with Dodona due to the expansion of the Molossian kingdom in the 4th century. Due to the paucity of references to Apollo from the 3rd century onwards, the lifetime of the buildings in the sacred area, it is unlikely that there was a temple for his cult.

The other divinity that pilgrims to Dodona consulted was **Themis**. Seven inscriptions from the 4th and 3rd centuries bear her name.<sup>80</sup> Her role as an oracular divinity is well known. Myths of her founding Delphi with Apollo,<sup>81</sup> as well as another version, in which she was, after Gaia and before Phoebe and Apollo, the second holder of the sanctuary are well attested.<sup>82</sup> The oldest cult of Themis in Greece is dated to the 5th century, primarily in the Attic center of Rhamnous.<sup>83</sup> Some scholars have

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<sup>76</sup> Although this is not one of the main facets of Apollo, we can link it to his role as a civilizing god, as we see in Delphi (Detienne, 2001, 180).

<sup>77</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 2004, 527.

<sup>78</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 65.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, 68–69.

<sup>80</sup> With Zeus, Dione, and Apollo: Dakaris, *Praktika* 1967, 49, No. 5. With Zeus and Dione: C23; *SGDI* 1581 (the name is completely restored by the editor); *DVC* 128A; *DVC* 1006B; *DVC* 2524B; *DVC* 3055A. Therefore, she does not appear alone in any case.

<sup>81</sup> Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F31b.

<sup>82</sup> Aesch., *Eum.* 1–12.

<sup>83</sup> Stafford, 1997, 159–161.

pointed out her connection with Gaia, possibly in relation with fertility and the need for establishing order in the world. In this sense, Themis tends to be seen as a deity of justice and civilization.<sup>84</sup> This facet might explain why at least two of the consultations from Dodona where Themis appears deal precisely with justice.<sup>85</sup>

The number of plaques bearing her name is remarkable. However, it is relatively small when compared to those directed at Zeus (Naïos) and Dione. Themis has a particularly strong bond with Zeus in mythology, as we can see in the Homeric poems, where she acts as his adviser, and in Hesiod, where she embodies law and morality.<sup>86</sup> Given her ubiquitous association with Zeus, it is possible that there was a cult of Themis in Dodona, but there is not enough evidence to confirm that the sanctuary had a temple for her worship, as Emmerling points out.<sup>87</sup>

There is only one literary account, although very precise and clear, concerning **Achelous'** worship at Dodona. The fourth century historian, Ephorus, relates that the oracle of Zeus in Dodona often recommended that consultants make sacrifices to the fluvial deity.<sup>88</sup> The Achelous was the longest river in Greece, starting in Epirus and delimiting the boundary between Akarnania and Aetolia.<sup>89</sup> Even though he was the only god of his kind to become panhellenic, there was never a temple for his cult;<sup>90</sup> perhaps because he inhabited the river. Carapanos identified a statuette found in Dodona with Achelous,<sup>91</sup> although the reason is unclear, since the features generally associated god – taurine mainly<sup>92</sup> – are lacking. It seems to me that his identification is based on the legs, which appear to simulate streams, and the bearded countenance of the figurine. The account of Ephorus is not itself evidence of an official cult of Achelous in Dodona. Nevertheless, the oracle's order to sacrifice to Achelous, instead of another god, may imply the presence of an altar for performing these rituals.

I would like to dwell on another appealing aspect of Achelous, his association with frontiers. There are more examples of this, as in Oichalia, Euboia, where archaeologists have discovered a bronze figurine of this deity precisely at the border of the sanctuary, beside a boundary stone.<sup>93</sup> This may have been the reason why the oracle of Dodona chose this god. The sanctuary was located on the border between Molossia and Thesprotia. In the same vein, Epirus too was considered a liminal region, be-

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, *passim*.

<sup>85</sup> C23 and *Praktika* 1967, 49, No. 5. The other questions are fragmented or talked about other issues.

<sup>86</sup> Stafford, 1997, 159.

<sup>87</sup> Emmerling, 2012, 206–207.

<sup>88</sup> Ephor. *FGH* 70 F20a-b; cf. Macrobi., *Sat.* 5, 18, 6–8. Later sources quoting this author are *Schol. Hom. Il.* 21, 195 (= *POx.* II 221 col. IX 21); Servius Danielis, *Verg. geor.* 1, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Lee, 2006, 318.

<sup>90</sup> Larson, 2007, 65.

<sup>91</sup> Carapanos, 1878, 32, No. 12 and pl. XIII, No. 2 and 2bis (unknown date and museum reference; not included in the catalogs of Dieterle and Piccinini).

<sup>92</sup> Lee, 2006, 320. The *LIMC* shows that horns were the most usual elements.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, 323–324; Larson, 2007, 67.

tween Greeks and barbarians. A sacrifice to Achelous, the most important river in the Hellenic world, would remind pilgrims of the Hellenicity of the population and the territory. It is perhaps unsurprising that the only literary reference to Achelous comes from the 4th century, the period in which the Molossian kingdom accelerated its expansion and began the complex process of monumentalizing Dodona.

**Athena** is thought to have had a cult in the Epirote sanctuary, too, due to Athenian influence beginning in the 5th century. The Molossians minted a series of coins in the 4th century that depicted Athena Parthenos.<sup>94</sup> We have previously discussed a figurine of the goddess from the 5th century, as well as two heads portraying the virgin goddess dated to the next century. Putting this into perspective, the period of Athenian meddling in Dodona started during the rule of Tharyps at the latest. He was educated in the Attic *polis* at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. There is no doubt about the presence of Athens in Dodona, as the speech of Hyperides concerning the confrontation against Olympias attests.<sup>95</sup> The Athenian orator, however, talks only about the cult of Dione. In the absence of further evidence, we must maintain that it is highly improbable that Athena was worshiped in Dodona.

The last case to be discussed is also not free from debate. In a 4th century oracular consultation the pilgrim asked the question to Zeus Naios, Dione and the **Syn-naoi**.<sup>96</sup> Hammond pointed out that this implied the opening of the sanctuary to other deities.<sup>97</sup> According to Quantin, the text could refer to deities that lived together with Zeus and Dione in the site.<sup>98</sup> If we follow this reasoning, it could be any of the gods and goddesses that may have had their own cult – but not a temple – in the sanctuary, namely Aphrodite, Themis, or Apollo. I would also like to note that the conventional reconstruction of the term *synnaoi* could actually be in the singular, i.e., σύνναε (the Vocative of σύνναος). As I have explained above, it is possible that Building Z was consecrated to the cult of Dione and was even shared with her daughter Aphrodite. If so, *synnaos* could refer to this goddess. However, since there are no other references to this deity in oracular consultations, whether the epithet belongs to Aphrodite, Themis or Apollo is impossible to ascertain.

In this chapter I have shown some of the problems concerning the cults of Dodona. It is important to take into account that the dimensions of the sanctuary were notably small and that there probably was no other area in the site for cult activity. Whereas other religious sites had two or more clearly defined areas for this purpose, as in the case of the five-shrines of Dion,<sup>99</sup> in the case of Dodona the walls bound only one *temenos*. It is reasonable to think that more areas for religious activity

<sup>94</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 72.

<sup>95</sup> Hyp., 4, 19.

<sup>96</sup> C24: [Ζ]εῦ Νάϊε καὶ Διώνῃ καὶ σύν[ναοι... αἰτῶ] / [ὅ]μᾶς ἀγαθεῖ τύχει δοῦνα[ι ἐμοί] / [γ]ὰν ἐργαζο[μ]ένωι καὶ ΕΝ[.][---]

<sup>97</sup> Hammond, 1967, 510 – 511.

<sup>98</sup> Quantin, 2008, 28 – 29.

<sup>99</sup> Pingiatoglou, 2016, 31.

will be found and that the acropolis contains important remains. In the meantime, all sources point to the conclusion that there were no other cult spaces. Despite its size, Dodona became the main Epirote sanctuary and acquired a panhellenic character. The truth is that Dodona did not experience the growth expected for this type of site. It remained small with all of its sacred sites gathered in one place.

It can be a mistake to assume that the finding of a statuette portraying a certain god in a shrine implies the presence of a cult for that deity. Archaeologists have discovered a remarkable variety of divine figures in Dodona, but more data is needed to confirm cults for those gods. Should we find several pieces of the same kind dedicated to the same god with a similar chronology, we will have better grounds for confirming it. The female figurines with doves dated to the 5th and 4th centuries present such a case. Moreover, we should be aware that many bronze statuettes originally belonged to vases, either as handles or as mere decorative elements. As such, they bring us into the sympotic sphere, so do not point necessarily to a specific cult.

Fortunately, epigraphy and literary sources allow us to go into further depth. The oracular consultations, in particular, are of enormous value. There are more than 4,000 texts, although many of them are so fragmented that the names of the recipient deities are not preserved. In the cases where this information still remains, Zeus Naios and Dione are the ones most commonly consulted. There is plenty of evidence for their cults, which were important enough for temples to be dedicated for their worship, E1 and Z, respectively. The problem arises when we try to discern whether more divinities were worshiped in this sacred space. As I have argued above, it is reasonable to think that Aphrodite, Themis, and Apollo were included in prayers of worshippers at Dodona. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that specific buildings were erected for them, with the exception of Aphrodite who may have shared a temple with Dione. Moreover, the uniqueness of the oracular consultations to Themis and Apollo may be motivated by different causes external to the sanctuary. To the catalogue of deities worshiped at Dodona, we may also add Achelous, who most likely had an altar at the site.

In any case, the introduction of new gods or goddesses into a shrine was not uncommon in ancient Greece, with Athens being the most studied case.<sup>100</sup> We have to understand it as the manifestation of historical processes in which Dodona was involved. This was usually linked to significant events or periods of changes. Furthermore, it is important to note that preexisting cults might evolve. We can see this when we look at the votives dedicated to Dione and/or Aphrodite, where it appears that the women with doves from the 5th and 4th were replaced by female heads. This shift in the types of objects offered may have had local, regional or superregional origins.

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100 Garland, 1992; Parker, 1996.

## 4.4 The oracle – How it worked

Consulting and talking to gods was part of daily life. There were many ways to ask a deity about any subject. Individuals could do so themselves by using dice for example. It was also possible to delegate the inquiry to another individual or collective. There were fortune-tellers, usually itinerant, and oracles with fixed locations for this purpose.<sup>101</sup> It was essential to make the right decision, whether it involved figuring out something from the past or foreseeing future events. What advantages did leaving the issue in the hands of a god furnish the individual? To begin, there is a certain relief of responsibility, or reduction of insecurity when one follows the instructions of a third party.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, we cannot ignore that the prevalence of divine consultation in ancient Greek society evinces the great trust the Greeks placed in this procedure. In the following chapter I will flesh out the manner by which pilgrims at Dodona consulted the oracle.

Exactly how an oracle functioned is not always clear. It is a process full of mysticism and obscurity, which enhances its connection with the divine world. In order to maintain this mysticism it was necessary to employ specific structures, rituals and mechanisms that could produce some sort of special effect. We know some of these methods. In Delphi the Pythia sat on a tripod and smelled vapors that brought about hallucinations;<sup>103</sup> in the oracle of Claros pilgrims consulted the deity through astrapalomy. To add to the mystique the configuration and decoration of the consultation room at Claros, with a vault, emulated the roof of heaven.<sup>104</sup> It has been commonly thought that oracular responses used to be ambiguous. This is indeed normal in Greek mythology.<sup>105</sup> An unclear response helped reduce the mistake factor, which might damage the prestige of the sanctuary. However, for the consultations at Dodona, of which the answers are preserved in most cases, ambiguity was not the rule.<sup>106</sup>

Dodona presents a peculiar case study. Sources provide information concerning different mechanisms of consultation, yet this is almost surely due to the confusion of ancient authors. In this section we will present all the available evidence concerning the consultation process at Dodona, taking stock of the literary sources, archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics, in an effort to cast some light on the question of which method – or methods – the oracle employed and whether these evolved over time.

The most sacred element of the sanctuary of Dodona was an oak (δρῦς). It was connected to Zeus Naios, perhaps as his home, as the god himself, or as a mere in-

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<sup>101</sup> Beerden, 2013, 9.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*, 1; 2014, 25–27.

<sup>103</sup> Fontenrose, 1978, 204; Johnston, 2008, 48–49.

<sup>104</sup> Moretti *et al.*, 2014, esp. 48.

<sup>105</sup> Johnston, 2008, 52–55.

<sup>106</sup> Bonnechere, 2013, 75.



strument for his prophecies.<sup>107</sup> The message would have been transmitted through the movement of the leaves.<sup>108</sup> Its magical quality is a recurring feature in ancient works, because it is said that the god spoke through it<sup>109</sup> or, as Philostratus writes, with ribbons tied to the branches.<sup>110</sup> Philostratus' account provides a realistic procedure – since we can assume that the tree did not actually speak – but we cannot rely on it entirely since he presents an amalgam of theories in this passage.

The second most important icons of Dodona were, as we have previously mentioned, the sacred doves. Their ubiquitous presence in the ancient sources, archaeological remains and their depiction on some coins alongside the oak, are sure evidence of their importance. Even the name of the priestesses at Dodona, the πελειάδες, was linked to the birds. The oracular consultation might have involved interpretation of their flight patterns, as some authors state.<sup>111</sup> The dove is in fact the bird most commonly used for this activity.<sup>112</sup> Piccinini states that the doves stood on the branches of the oak and did not fly,<sup>113</sup> but, she bases her claim on written sources in which this information is not provided.<sup>114</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, on the other hand, renders this account.<sup>115</sup>

The archaeological evidence supports a third possibility that we also find in ancient texts – bronze cauldrons on tripods. The importance of the cauldrons is marked by its depiction on some coins of the Epirote *Koinon*.<sup>116</sup> A few ancient sources refer to a cauldron that made sounds when it was hit.<sup>117</sup> The oldest cauldron fragments at Dodona date to the 8th century and match the chronology of site's development into a full-fledged oracle. It is plausible that they could have been used in the manner described above, but we cannot discard the possibility that they might simply have been offerings. What do we know about this procedure? Demon explains that several cauldrons with tripods surrounded the cult area of Dodonaean Zeus, namely,

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**107** Parke, 1967, 26 ss.

**108** Lévêque, 1997, 198. Watson Williams suggests that chemicals in the oak leaves, if mixed with iron sulfate, could have revealed symbols (1959, 204). No other studies delve into this mechanism, the use of which I find unlikely.

**109** *Od.* 14, 327–330 (cf. *Str.*, 7, 7, 11); *Aesch.*, *PV* 829–835; *Soph.*, *Trach.* 1164–1172; *Pl.*, *Phdr.* 275b; *Ap.Rhod.*, 1, 523–527 and 4, 580–592 (the Argos had a piece of timber from the Dodonaean oak that talked); *Philostr.*, *Im.* 2, 15; *Paus.*, 7, 21, 2; *Zen.*, 6, 5; *Claud.*, 7, 117–119; *Symm.*, 4, 33, 2; *Suda*, s.v. Δωδώνη.

**110** *Philostr.*, *Im.* 2, 33.

**111** *Ar.*, *Au.* 710–733; *Str.*, *Fr.* 7, 1 and 1b.

**112** Bodson, 1975, 117.

**113** Piccinini, 2012, 291–292.

**114** *Str.*, *Fr.* 7, 2 and *Ar.*, *Au.* 710–733.

**115** *Dion.Hal.*, *Ant. Rom.* 1, 14, 5.

**116** Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 141–146.

**117** *Call.*, *Hymn* 4. 277–287; *Luc.*, 6, 422–430; *Aristid.*, *Four.* 672; *Steph.Byz.*, Δωδώνη; *Suda*, s.v. Δωδωναῖον χαλκεῖον. Other references that talk about the sound of the cauldron, but without mentioning oracular activity, are *Ap.Dys.*, *Syn.* 3, 119; *Philostr.*, *Im.* 2, 33; *Aus.*, 26, 23–26.



the oak.<sup>118</sup> At one point, the people of Kerkyra gave a present, ἀνάθημα, to the sanctuary, a little statue of a man holding a bronze whip with bones at the end of its three chains. These struck the cauldron and produced noises that would have been interpreted as the god's speech.<sup>119</sup>

How does all this information fit with the physical remains of Dodona? The shrine was open-air until the erection of a *naiskos* at end of the 5th century. In the second half of the 4th century, a wall was built to demarcate the *temenos* of this specific space. In later phases this ensemble was remodelled and expanded. The original height of the wall was 1.08 m in the eastern side and 1.50 in the western flank. The new walls raised in the following periods were taller than the average person. It is possible that the introduction of the Kerkyraean ἀνάθημα happened during the reconstruction of the sacred area of Zeus Naios. Since the walls already surrounded the oak, the circle of cauldrons on tripods was no longer necessary and was replaced by a single cauldron, hit by the chains of the statue.<sup>120</sup>

Two other versions in literature seem unreliable or, at the very least, unrelated to the oracular practices at the sanctuary. Pliny and Servius describe a fountain at Dodona that could extinguish the fire of torches and again set them alight if they were in its vicinity.<sup>121</sup> In my opinion they do not seem to refer, in this case, to any consultation but are simply describing the magical character of the sanctuary. Prudentius records that there were hallucinogenic vapors in Dodona,<sup>122</sup> a theory supported by Scott Littleton.<sup>123</sup> The reference, however, is so exceptional that we would be justified in suspecting that Prudentius mixed up his stories and borrowed a well-known element from the oracle at Delphi.

Epigraphy has contributed significantly to our knowledge of Dodona. Visitors wrote their questions on lead – and, in a few cases, bronze – tablets, an almost unique procedure in ancient Greece.<sup>124</sup> Surprisingly there are no references to this practice in our ancient sources. It is possible that Cicero might be referring to it when he narrates the episode of an ape, owned by the king of Molossia, that threw a pot containing the tablets of the oracle.<sup>125</sup> However, in Cicero's account, the procedure involves pulling out one tablet from the pile, each one with an answer, a sort of lot system. It is true that many of the consultations preserved in Dodona

<sup>118</sup> cf. Steph. Byz., Δωδώνη.

<sup>119</sup> Str., Fr. 7, 3. Zenobius describes both statue – of a boy, not a man – and cauldron standing on the top of two columns (6, 5). This alternative version might be right. Piccinini, who examines the description of the piece and compares it with this kind of well-elaborated offering, dates it to the 4th-3rd centuries, and definitely not earlier than the mid-4th (2017, 83–86).

<sup>120</sup> Cook, 1902, 13 and 28; Dakaris, 1973, 159–160.

<sup>121</sup> Plin., *HN* 2, 228; Pompon, 2, 43; Lucr., 6, 879–889; Serv., *Aen.* 3, 466.

<sup>122</sup> Prud., *Apoth.* 439–444.

<sup>123</sup> Scott Littleton, 1986, 85

<sup>124</sup> For more on the subject see Martín González, 2012. In no other place were consultations systematically written.

<sup>125</sup> Cic. *Div.* 1, 34 (76) and 2, 32 (69).

could have been answered with a simple “yes” or “no”. Moreover, cleromancy is attested in some consultations, such as those dealing with justice, crimes and legal disputes.<sup>126</sup> There are even pieces on which we can read the term κληρος or κλᾶρος, its Dorian equivalent.<sup>127</sup> We also find expressions with the verb ἀναίρῃω (“to take”, “to raise”) or other similar phrases.<sup>128</sup> Many questions, however, required a more complex answer.<sup>129</sup> I, therefore, support the hypothesis of Parker and Carbon,<sup>130</sup> that a lot was used when the question allowed it, while more complex questions demanded a more elaborate process.

The exact procedure for consultation with lead tablets is poorly understood. An epigraphic analysis of the pieces reveals the use of different Greek dialects and evinces the fact that pilgrims wrote their questions down.<sup>131</sup> The plaque, which was extremely thin, was probably then folded and rolled before handing it over to the personnel of the oracle. On the exterior of the plaque it is common to find a summary of the topic or the name of the consultant, usually abbreviated.<sup>132</sup> In some cases, we can see a letter of the alphabet written in a larger size. This has been understood as a way of establishing an order among the pilgrims’ inquiries.<sup>133</sup> We do not know if this ordering process involved criteria other than the time of arrival. It is quite possible, for example, that the social status of an individual could have influenced the order in which their inquiries were received and answered. Thanks to the style of writing and the presence of various dialects we can date a large number of these documents. The oldest among these date to the 6th century and the end of this manner of consultation has been conventionally linked to the Roman conquest of Epirus in 167. The 5th and 4th centuries offer by far the greatest concentration of written consultations,<sup>134</sup> after which there is a perceptible and inexplicable decrease.

It seems that the plaques were not treated by the Dodonaean as symbolic objects with special meaning, since most of them have been found dispersed throughout the sacred space and not in a ritual deposit created for this purpose. They were most probably cast aside after being used several times. The greatest number of plaques were found in the area of Building E1, the temple of Zeus.<sup>135</sup> There are more than 1,500 tablets,<sup>136</sup> surely a small portion of the total number inscribed over the

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**126** Chaniotis, 2018, 331–334.

**127** Parker, 2016, 88–90. In the new corpus of DVC, 226B, 1491A, 2401, 3032, 3128, 3942B, and 4014.

**128** Parker, 2015, 112.

**129** For example, LOD 141 and 142.

**130** Parker, 2015; Carbon, 2015, 84.

**131** Christidis, Dakaris and Vokotopoulos, 1999, 68.

**132** Lhôte, 2006, 68; Johnston, 2008, 68.

**133** LOD 80, 92, 96, 109, 111, 121, 125, 145, and a long list of pieces in DVC.

**134** As DVC proposes, although Méndez Dosuna points out that in many cases the datings seem to be earlier than objective criteria would warrant (2016, 119).

**135** Lhôte, 2006, 428–429.

**136** Méndez Dosuna states that the cipher is much bigger, but there are still many unpublished (2008, 48–49).

centuries, though we must remember that they were very often reused. We might also expect that those that were too thin to write on were melted down to be used again.

Is it possible, as some authors suggest,<sup>137</sup> that pilgrims carried the plaques away with them? There are some places where this seems to have happened, for example, Khoros in Kurdish Syria where it was customary to extract a small portion of the wall of the temple and deposit an offering.<sup>138</sup> But in Dodona this is unlikely for two reasons. First, all of the tablets have been found in Dodona. Nowhere else have archaeologists discovered this kind of artifact. We would expect that if pilgrims wanted to take the tablets with them, the object itself would have had great value and might be found, for example, among the grave goods in a burial. Second, if all of the tablets have been found in Dodona, why does it appear that so few pilgrims took theirs?

Piccinini has provided a different hypothesis, claiming that they were not the consultation itself, but the commemoration.<sup>139</sup> Those who wanted to leave proof of their visit to the sanctuary could write the question down after the oracular act. Although difficult to confirm, the theory is suggestive. However, it does not explain why the questions are usually written in the present, instead of the imperfect or aorist. Moreover, in only one of the plaques in which both the question and answer are preserved, are both question and answer written by the same person.<sup>140</sup> Piccinini's hypothesis implies that pilgrims inscribed both on their own. Although no other oracle seems to have had the same procedure, we can compare these consultations with the *iamata* of Epidauros.<sup>141</sup> These epigraphic documents, located in the *tholos* and dated to the end of the 4th century, register a few pilgrims to the site who visited the sanctuary to be healed<sup>142</sup> and, after the process, which was not always satisfactory, decided to record their experience on stone. The verbal tense employed in all of these is the imperfect, which is to be expected since they wrote their account at the end of their visit. In light of this comparison, I support the *communis opinio* and interpret these plaques as oracular consultations, not commemorations of the visit. Moreover, even if Piccinini's conjecture is correct, it would not change the way we think the oracle functioned, but just the method by which the question was transmitted to the sanctuary personnel.

It is now time to summarize all of the information provided in this section and to try to discern the evolution of oracular activity at Dodona. We might assume that not all the procedures mentioned in literature were real since they are sometimes at odds with one another and appear to refer to procedures in other oracles. We are not even certain, in fact, whether there was just one system or whether two or more coincided

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<sup>137</sup> Marsá, 2007, 263.

<sup>138</sup> Kristensen, 2014, 2–5.

<sup>139</sup> Piccinini, 2013a.

<sup>140</sup> *LOD* 95.

<sup>141</sup> Naiden, 2006, 81–87.

<sup>142</sup> Paus., 2, 27, 3.

in time, as some scholars have suggested.<sup>143</sup> Only Theodoretus of Cyrus mentions two mechanisms employed at the same time in the oracular consultation, the oak and the cauldrons.<sup>144</sup> The only element that was undoubtedly involved in the consultation is the lead tablets. But this only concerns a step in the transmission of the message, not the specific method employed by the personnel of the temple to solicit the gods. We might also add the cauldrons and tripods found during excavation as likely instruments of oracular inquiry. The description of the sacred oak surrounded by these objects fits well with the material evidence and would explain why the tree was so important even if it played a secondary role in the consultation. Finally, the doves seemed to have been more strongly linked to the peleïades and the cult of Dione, and were mostly symbolic.

It is possible to discern different phases in the use of the oracle. If we follow the Homeric verses, the first oracular element was probably the oak itself. At this point the *selloi* might have interpreted the movement of the leaves. It is also quite likely, however, that the sacred tree was merely symbolic. Cauldrons and tripods begin to appear in the 8th and 7th centuries. If they were next to the oak, the ensemble would conserve its significance. No later than the 6th century, the shrine started to employ the lead plaques without interfering with the oracular procedure. The next change would come with the construction, in the third quarter of the 4th century, of the wall delimiting the *temenos* to the temple of Zeus. A circle of cauldrons on tripods was no longer necessary for this and, due to a shortage of space they were replaced by a different – but at the same time similar – mechanism. This may be when the Kerkyraean present came into play.<sup>145</sup> Inside the *temenos* of the walls, next to the sacred oak stood only one cauldron on a tripod struck by the chains held by a bronze statue of a man or boy.

The absence of columns on the eastern side of the wall might show enduring importance of the oak, which would have been located there. This explains why a series of Molossian coins dated to ca. 300 depicted the oak with three doves on its branches. Moreover, a 4th century consultation, probably made by the inhabitants of Dodona, asks if there was a new sign on the oak.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless a decrease in its importance is appreciable on two lines of walls – with different chronology – bounding the temple of Zeus, the entrance of which was always on the southern side. On the oldest wall (350–325 a.C.) access was nearer to the right corner; on the new one it was in the center. This change may have an explanation – initially the oak was the main element of the ensemble and the entrance was placed so that the tree was the first thing a person entering the *temenos* saw. The later entrance was placed in front of the temple, relegating the oak to the background and creating a new perspective.

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<sup>143</sup> Nicol, 1958, 133.

<sup>144</sup> Thdt., *Affect.* 10, 3.

<sup>145</sup> This sequence coincides precisely with the dating proposed by Piccinini for the anathema in 4th-3rd centuries, or at least not earlier than the mid-4th (2017, 83–86).

<sup>146</sup> DVC 2519B; cf. Parker, 2016, 85, n. 64.

The tree appears to have endured until Late Antiquity, when an Illyrian cut it down.<sup>147</sup>

A few scholars have cast doubt on the role of tripods and other oracular instruments. They interpret these as offerings, citing the inscriptions that some of these artifacts bear.<sup>148</sup> We have previously discussed three of these cases, two from the rhapsodes Terpsikles and Klearchos, and one from the *polis* of the Lechoians. The typology is varied. Some were small, such as those from the rhapsodes who may have won them in musical competitions.<sup>149</sup> These were certainly votives, but the bigger ones, in my opinion, could have had both functions. The key is to move away from an interpretation that designates objects as single-purpose. Although we tend to understand materials from the past in this way, they might have had different meanings, sometimes even opposing ones, over the centuries.<sup>150</sup>

There are two more things to take into account. First, apart from those tripods dated to the 8th-7th centuries, most others come from the 6th to the 3rd centuries, especially the 5th and 4th. In other words, tripods seem to have lost their significance when the temple and the wall were built. The reason may lie in the reconstruction suggested above: the Kerkyraean ἀνάθημα replaced the circle of tripods, thereby reducing the desirability of a tripod as an offering. Second, we must consider the role sound played in the consultation.<sup>151</sup> The cult of Pan used to employ musical instruments, mainly the syrinx, which strenghted the extra-sensorial experience and perception of landscape.<sup>152</sup> The cauldrons of tripods of Dodona might have served a similar purpose. During the phase in which the tripods encircled the sacred oak, the personnel of the temple would have struck them resulting in an amalgam of sounds with different vibrations and tones. Even though the later phase had just one cauldron, the statue hitting it with three chains would have also produced a multi-dimensional sound. The walls are likely to have contributed to the acoustic of the process, with the sound bouncing for a short time. It is true that the first wall was quite short – 1.50 in its top part – but the later reconstructions were significantly higher.

## 4.5 Rituals in Dodona

Oftentimes our literary and epigraphic sources describe festivities or cultic events that we might understand as rites. Archaeological evidence can help us fill in the details of these institutions. This section aims to compile the available information concerning rites at Dodona and seeks to show bonds that Dodona maintained with both

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<sup>147</sup> Serv., *Aen.* 3, 466.

<sup>148</sup> Dieterle, 2007, 176–178. Bosman finds it likely (2016, 188).

<sup>149</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 82–83.

<sup>150</sup> Hodder and Hutson, 2003, 209.

<sup>151</sup> For a more detailed study, see Chapinal-Heras, 2016.

<sup>152</sup> Yioutsos, 2015, 60.

regional and more distant entities. Before proceeding, it is essential to explain which kind of rituals we are talking about. A rite can have an individual or collective character, each one with its own features. In the former, the individual accomplishes the act at any moment of the year in an attempt to connect with the god or goddess. In the second, a group or a community participates in the same event, usually marked in the calendar.<sup>153</sup> This section will focus on collective rituals.

It was not in Dodona, but in Passaron, where the Molossian kings took their oaths. Thanks to Plutarch we know that the Molossian monarchs had to periodically perform a sacrifice to Zeus Areios in Passaron and swear to rule according to the law. In the passage from Plutarch both Neoptolemus II and Pyrrhus are said to have participated.<sup>154</sup> I will not delve into the political significance of this passage,<sup>155</sup> which provides evidence for a Molossian ritual required of sovereigns. What interests me is the question of whether something similar took place in Dodona. I find it reasonable to think that Dodona, as the main sanctuary of the kingdom, would have had such a conspicuous role. Moreover, we would expect that, in the period of the Epirote *Koinon*, the leaders of the federal entity would have proceeded in the same way, performing a ritual in acceptance of the post. Since Dodona was, at the very least, the religious capital of the *Koinon*, it would have been the ideal setting for such a ceremony. Unfortunately, there is no evidence for any of this and we cannot, at the time of writing, pursue this idea further.

Some literary fragments mention two processions with Dodona as the final destination and it is possible to add a third one of mythical nature. The first originated in Boiotia, the second was the Athenian procession to the cult of Dione and the third was the offerings of the Hyperboreans.

The Boiotians had the tradition of sending a tripod to Dodona every year. The apparent reason is that they had killed one of the three peleïades of the sanctuary in ancient times, partly because they were suspicious of her, and partly because she ordered them to commit a sacrilege to secure good luck. The priestess was killed in a pyre or in a cauldron full of boiling water.<sup>156</sup> The ruling stated that the culprits would not be executed, but that from that moment on the Boiotians would annually bring a tripod to the Epirote shrine.<sup>157</sup> The sanctuary of Itoneus was probably the starting point of the *tripodephoria*.<sup>158</sup> I will return to the meaning of this tradition, which connected Epirus with Boiotia. For the moment, I would like to focus on how archaeology provides another example of this kind of procession: the tripod from the city of the Lechoians.<sup>159</sup> Dated to the 5th century, the location of this center

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<sup>153</sup> Brandt, 2012, 142.

<sup>154</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 5, 5–6.

<sup>155</sup> For this, see Cataldi, 1990, 186, and Cabanes, 2005, 148.

<sup>156</sup> Eur., *TrGF* 368 = *Append. Provv.* 3, 97 (*CPG* 1, 434, 15).

<sup>157</sup> Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F119; cf. Str., 9, 2, 4.

<sup>158</sup> Ganter, 2013, 97.

<sup>159</sup> MN At. No. 451.

is unknown.<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, the material evidence confirms that the *tripodephoria* was a recurring ritual in Dodona.

The Athenian initiative to send a *theoria* to Dodona for the worship of Dione is mentioned by Hyperides.<sup>161</sup> This activity included the celebration of an expensive sacrifice and the adornment of the cult statue of Dione. It is worth pointing out that this was a unique, specific event, and, unlike the *tripodephoria*, was not performed periodically. It took place in an agitated time, soon before 330. One might wonder whether the strengthening of contacts between Athens and Dodona – and, thus, Molossia – might be linked to a weakening of the relationship between the Attic *polis* and the sanctuary at Delphi. However, there is evidence of Athenian delegations to the Phocian shrine at the time of Lycurgus (334–322) and another in the context of the Third Sacred War in 355.<sup>162</sup> The first one is chronologically close to the situation between the Molossian Olympias and Athens,<sup>163</sup> and corroborates the fluency of contacts between Athens and Delphi. Therefore, we should interpret the *theoria* to Dodona as evidence of the strong bond between both places, and not as a consequence of reduced contact with the sanctuary of Apollo.

The story of Hyperboreans has always been intriguing. They appear in Greek literature as a population inhabiting a northern territory living in idleness and dedicated to the cult of Apollo.<sup>164</sup> Herodotus makes reference to a trip the Hyperboreans undertook to take offerings to the sanctuary of Delos. After crossing the Adriatic, they make a stop at Dodona, the first Greek location on their itinerary.<sup>165</sup> While there are other versions of the story, all of them concur in mentioning the Epirote sanctuary.<sup>166</sup> There is epigraphic evidence of the Hyperboreans in Delos,<sup>167</sup> but it is likely to have been an artificial construction based on the myth. Piccinini, following the theory of Castelnuevo, sets its creation in the mid-7th century under the influence of Euboea, whose presence in Epirus and some islands facing the mainland may be more important and evident than once thought.<sup>168</sup> What I want to underscore here is that these passages depict Dodona as the nexus, or a sort of buffer zone, between the barbarian and the Greek world. The myth takes the space into account and uses it to spin a tale that endured for centuries.

A few studies have dealt with another ritual that might have taken place in Dodona, also in connection with Boiotia.<sup>169</sup> Cook tied the episode, narrated by Ephorus,

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<sup>160</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 217–218.

<sup>161</sup> Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24–26.

<sup>162</sup> Parker, 2007, 86.

<sup>163</sup> According to Boëthius, the first scholar to prepare a monograph about this topic, it took place in 330 (1918, 138).

<sup>164</sup> Piquero, 2012, 110.

<sup>165</sup> Hdt., 4, 33, 1–2.

<sup>166</sup> Piquero, 2012, 116.

<sup>167</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 243–244.

<sup>168</sup> Castelnuevo, 2005; Piccinini, 2017, 45–57.

<sup>169</sup> Cook, 1903, 181; Gartziou-Tatti, 1990, 182, 40; Valdés Guía, 2002, 210, n. 58 and 211, n. 64.



of the priestess who was killed by some Boiotians after being thrown into a pyre<sup>170</sup> or a cauldron full of boiling water,<sup>171</sup> with a theory, supported during his time but currently rejected, about the etymology of Naïos, which he interpreted as “the tree-trunk”.<sup>172</sup> He connected it with the Daedala, a festival that took place in Plataea in honor to Hera. The event involved the transportation of a tree, which simulated a xoanon, dressed like a bride, to a nearby oak forest. In the Great Daedala, celebrated every 60 years, 14 Boiotian cities participated, each one furnishing a statue. The xoana were later burnt.<sup>173</sup> In a similar vein, Gartziou-Tatti connected the tradition with the cauldrons of Dodona, the instrument employed in the murder of the priestess, according to one of the versions.<sup>174</sup> We might add that Cook referred to the cult statue of Dione, whose existence is sure because Hyperides mentions it,<sup>175</sup> as a xoanon in a previous phase. Nevertheless, the only link that this festival has with Dodona, if any, relies on the interpretation of the epithet Naïos as “of the tree-trunk”. This hypothesis was rightly discarded long ago, and I see no connection between Dodona and the Boiotian Daedala.

The only explicit reference to a sacrifice in the Epirote sanctuary comes from Pindar, although its fragmented state makes it difficult to extract a conclusion. In his *Paean* 59, the lyric poet mentions Dodona. The last two preserved verses read as follows: ἐνθεν μὲν[ τριπόδεσσί τε / καὶ θυσίαισ[ ]<sup>176</sup> (“and from there, with tripods and with sacrifices...”. The state of the line does not allow us to know which which noun “θυσίαισ[” modified.<sup>177</sup> This notwithstanding, the passage offers remarkable evidence of a ritual in which tripods played an active role and may perhaps be a reference of a *tripodephoria*.

Dakaris proposed the practice of bull sacrifice in Dodona, basing his hypothesis on a series of silver coins that the Epirote *Koinon* minted. One of the sides depicts Zeus Naïos and Dione, and the other shows a bull inside a laurel wreath with the legend ΑΠΕΙ-/ΡΩΤΑΝ. Dakaris interpreted it as a bull consecrated to the goddess – Dione, perhaps – in a ritual sacrifice performed with a double axe in which the blood gave fertility the soil.<sup>178</sup> Needless to say, such a description does not appear in any other source. It is based solely on the coin motif and we cannot be certain of what the bull is representing. It is possible that it was a symbol of the *Koinon* itself, one of the *ethne* or, perhaps, the importance of pastoralism in Epirus.<sup>179</sup> In short,

170 Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F119; cf. Str., 9, 2, 4.

171 Eur., *TrGF* 368 = *Append. Provv.* 3, 97 (*CPG* 1, 434, 15).

172 Cook, 1903, 181.

173 Paus., 9, 3. For a more detailed study of the Daedala: Schachter, 1986, 244–250.

174 Gartziou-Tatti, 1990, 182, 40.

175 Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24–26.

176 Pind., *Fr.* 59; cf. Piccinini, 2012, 247. See also Kowalzig, 2007, 332.

177 Piccinini suggests a Thessalian ritual, since in the scholia we can read Θεσσαλοί (2017, 111–118).

178 Dakaris, 1973, 157–158.

179 Aristotle refers to the 400 cows that the Molossian monarchy owned (*HA* 8, 7, 17–24).



I see Dakaris' hypothesis untenable given the current evidence. There is no doubt, however, that there were sacrifices in Dodona, performed during many of the activities that took place in the sanctuary. This is probably the reason why archaeologists have found bones in a few areas of the sanctuary, especially in the *prytaneion* and in the theatre, although the latter is surely due, at least in part, to its function as arena in Imperial times.<sup>180</sup>

In the analysis of rites at Dodona we must also take account of the *theoroi*, "sacred pilgrims" acting on behalf of a community. In this section we will study the *theoroi* who visited from Epidauros, Delphi and Argos. Although no surviving document from Dodona attests to this practice, it is almost certain that there was a reception for foreign *theoroi*. Kowalzig highlights the role played by *theoria* as a mechanism of social and political integration, with *theoroi* from different places participating together in theatrical performances.<sup>181</sup> There were also cases of regional *theoria*, during which the sanctuary became a pivotal site for communities living in the same area. A good example is the Panionian festival, in which Ionian cities, including a few from Central Greece, participated.<sup>182</sup> I would venture to suggest that Dodona, which had the largest theater in Epirus, could have hosted a festival of this kind, in which the different *ethne* of the Epirote *Koinon* would have taken part as a way of promoting the unity of the federal state and its identity.

The above discussion encompasses all of the available data for rites in Dodona. It seems clear that different ceremonies took place there, a few of which can be traced thanks to sources. They show the importance of the sanctuary in the context not only of Epirus, but also other Greek areas. If we look for analogies with other cult sites, we can imagine that there the calendar included more regulated rituals, for example, sacrifices to the different deities worshipped in the sanctuary. There is also evidence for the celebration of *symposia*, which included a variety of rites.<sup>183</sup> In Olympia, there were at least 70 spots where ritual sacrifices were performed<sup>184</sup> and the city of Elis used the Olympic sacred space for the ratification of several treaties with other *poleis*,<sup>185</sup> which entailed the performance of more rites. It is reasonable to think that the same happened in Dodona. With respect to Delphi, those centers and communities that erected treasuries carried out different religious activities in their respective buildings.<sup>186</sup> Another ritual that must have certainly been performed in

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**180** Dakaris, *Praktika*, 1985, 44 (*prytaneion*, ox and ovine bones); Evangelidis and Dakaris, *Arch. Eph.*, 1959, 66 (various); Dakaris, *Arch. Eph.*, 1960, 35 (theater); Piccinini, 2013b, 184 (probably in 2nd-4th cents. CE).

**181** Kowalzig, 2006, 71.

**182** Kowalzig, 2006, 48–50.

**183** Nilsson, 1940, 79–80; Vernant, 1991, 50–53; Marinatos, 1993, 228; Brandt, 2012, 153–154.

**184** Himmelmann, 2001, 156.

**185** Scott, 2010, 33.

**186** *Ibidem*, *passim*.

Dodona was the complex process of purifying a sacred space after contamination.<sup>187</sup> Dodona suffered attacks on at least three occasions, perpetrated by the Aetolians in 219,<sup>188</sup> the Romans in 167,<sup>189</sup> and the Thracians in 88.<sup>190</sup> It is likely that specific rituals were performed after these attacks to clean the site.

## 4.6 The Naia

The presence of a theater and a stadium in Dodona indicate that agonistic competitions took place in the sanctuary. We can reconstruct these at least partially based on epigraphical and archaeological evidence.<sup>191</sup> Cabanes published the main study devoted to this topic in 1988. Although new data has surfaced since its publication, it remains the reference work.

Several documents attest to the creation of figures in charge of the organization of the Naia, the *agonothetes*<sup>192</sup> and the *naiarchos*.<sup>193</sup> It is unclear what functions each position entailed. Inscriptions found on different sites across Greece register the participation of various individuals in this competition.<sup>194</sup> Another text, found on the island of Tinos and dated to ca. 192, mentions the Epirote *Koinon* and appears to announce the Naia.<sup>195</sup> The archaeological remains of Dodona also provide some objects connected to the contests, including the above mentioned tripods dedicated by two rhapsodes, two alters, or weights, in the shape of a boar,<sup>196</sup> and an iron strigil deposited by king Zeniketes, dating c. 80 BCE.<sup>197</sup> The corpus of *DVC* also offers a variety of consultations regarding competitions, which one may assume that in some cases might be those held in Dodona, although the name of the Naia does not appear.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Cole, 2004, 47.

<sup>188</sup> Polyb., 4, 67, 1.

<sup>189</sup> Plut., *Aem.* 29.

<sup>190</sup> Parke, 1967, 122–123.

<sup>191</sup> Cabanes (1988, 53–54) also mentions a literary passage: Ath., 5, 203A. However, Athenaeus only states that Ptolemy I Soter and Berenike won chariot competitions, without specifying the place. Therefore, it could have been in Dodona or somewhere else.

<sup>192</sup> C27; C29; C30; C71; *SEG* XXIII, 472; *SEG* XL, 690; *SGDI* 1370; *SGDI* 1371.

<sup>193</sup> *SGDI* 1348 (a doubtful reconstruction, according to Cabanes, 1988b, 56); *SGDI* 1356.

<sup>194</sup> Cabanes 1988b, 67 (from Priene, it mentions the pankration); Cabanes 1988b, 68 (Delos, wrestling and pankration in adult category); Cabanes 1988b, 70 (from Athens, similar); Cabanes 1988b, 71–72 (pentathlon); *IG* IV<sup>1</sup>, 428 (Sicyon, wrestling, pankration and the *pygmachia* or boxing, in the youth category); *IG* V<sup>2</sup>, 118 (Tegea, winner probably in a tragedy).

<sup>195</sup> *SEG* XL, 690; cf. Étienne 1987, 175; Cabanes, 1988b, 74–76.

<sup>196</sup> Dakaris, 1971, 71.

<sup>197</sup> Carapanos 1878, 107, No. 1 and pl. XXVI, No. 8.

<sup>198</sup> *DVC* 225A, 447A, 491A, 635A, 825A, 849A, 1011A, 1389A, 1396A, 1996B, 2036B, 2089A, 2216B, 2986A, 3103A, and 3797. Their chronology covers the period from the 6th to the 4th century. As said above, none of them refer explicitly to the Naia. In other cases, we can see a clear connection with the Olympic Games (1207B, 1878A, 3509A; 4079A, and 4080B; perhaps also 1993A).

A few years ago, unexpected news broke concerning the Antikythera Mechanism, a small artifact found in the remains of a boat that sank in the first half of the 1st century BCE near the island of Antikythera, in the Aegean.<sup>199</sup> Studies of the piece showed that it could measure time and functioned as a Greek calendar making capable of making complex astronomic calculations.<sup>200</sup> More recently, 3D photographs and tomographies have allowed researchers to read a large part of the text that the 82 fragments of the object contained. This information included references to the four great Games, the Olympics, Nemeans, Pythians and Isthmians, as well as the Naia (“NAA”) and a sixth one, no longer preserved.<sup>201</sup> This is hard evidence of the competition’s importance in the Greek world.

The Naia were probably celebrated every four years<sup>202</sup> in the month of Apellaios,<sup>203</sup> which, according to the calendar, started at the end of September and lasted until the beginning of October,<sup>204</sup> namely, in autumn, when Epirote shepherds returned home.<sup>205</sup> The theater and stadium, as well as the information on the inscriptions confirm that there were athletic (stadium race, pentathlon, wrestling, pankration, boxing), artistic (dramatic and musical) and perhaps even hippic agones. According to Delcourt, who bases his conjecture on the importance of the oracle and a parallel with the Olympic games, winners in the contests received a tripod and an oak wreath.<sup>206</sup> It is not possible to confirm whether tripods were awarded as trophies, but the oak wreath is likely to have existed, especially if we take into account its depiction on the coinage of the Molossian kingdom, the Alliance and the Epirote *Koinon*.<sup>207</sup>

The chronology of the Naia is still uncertain. The main theory supports the foundation of the competition in the reign of Pyrrhus, at the beginning of the 3rd century.<sup>208</sup> However, a few scholars argue that they go back to at least the 5th.<sup>209</sup> The strongest evidence in favor of this theory is the tripods dedicated by two rhapsodes, Terpsikles (5th century)<sup>210</sup> and Klearchos (4th-3rd). From the 4th century we also have the votive plaque of Soteris, from Cyprus, who proclaimed his skills with his instrument. The oak wreath often depicted on coins might be another piece of evi-

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199 Vallianato, 2012, 251.

200 Cowen, 2008, 10.

201 Freeth *et al.*, 2008, 616.

202 Hatzopoulos and Mari, 2004, 509–511. Based on epigraph C71, which mentions an *agonothetes* in his fourth year. The argument is not consistent but the analogies with the Great Games make the theory plausible

203 Cabanes, 2003, 96.

204 Quantin, 1999a, 91.

205 Quantin, 2008, 34–37.

206 Delcourt, 1992, 56.

207 Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 132–146.

208 Hammond, 1967, 432; Cabanes, 1988b, 53.

209 Tzouvara-Souli, 2004, 518; Piccinini, 2012, 82–83.

210 According to *SEG* XLVI, 2312, probably 4th century.

dence, since the earliest series dates to the Molossian kingdom, in the 4th century. Piccinini also thinks that a cymbal from the 6th century may be linked to the Naia. If true, it would be the oldest remain associated with the Naia to be preserved in the archaeological record. I propose that we consider the oracular consultations cited above. Although no explicit mention of the competition's name is made, it would not be surprising if a participant consulting the oracle before the event felt no need to explicitly mention the games by name, since he was already there. Later we will see that there are questions regarding agones. Finally, a passage in Herodotus might offer further testimony. According to his account, Cleisthenes of Sicyon, tyrant in the first decades of the 5th century, took advantage of the Olympic Games to look for a husband for his daughter. Among the candidates was a certain Alkon representing the Molossians.<sup>211</sup> We may assume that this person was a member of the royal house or, at least, an aristocrat. If the story is true, it offers certain evidence of Molossian participation in agonistic competitions, which could possibly imply that they had games in their own territory. In my opinion, there is enough evidence to suggest that the Naia predated Pyrrhus. With regard to its decline, the last source we have that mentions it is an inscription from 241–242 CE mentioning an *agonothetes* of Zeus Naios and Dione.<sup>212</sup>

Debate concerning the beginning the Naia is ongoing. From my point of view, an older date seems more reasonable and better supported by the evidence. Needless to say, the event would have evolved over time. It is very possible that it started out as a local or regional event and grew in importance in the Hellenistic Age, thanks, at least in part, to the construction of permanent buildings, such as the theater and the stadium. Eventually they would have become panhellenic, as the Antikythera Mechanism suggests. Moreover, I understand this process as part of the discourse of growth and development of the sanctuary in the political sphere, connected to the kingdom of Molossia first and the Epirote *Koinon* later. As such, it would be tied to the claim of the Greek identity of these communities. At its very beginning, whether in Classical times or even the 6th century, they would have been performed in a sanctuary with no permanent structures; that is to say, they were a small-scale agonistic competition. Its original goal might have been to strengthen the union among the sub-*ethne* of Dodona's surroundings. On the other hand, the plaque of Soterios, from Cyprus, and the tripod of Terpsikles, a name attested only in Cyrene and Didyma,<sup>213</sup> suggest a wider scope for the event. It is possible, then, that, although regional at its inception, the Naia drew participants from further areas in the first centuries of their existence.

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<sup>211</sup> Hdt., 6, 127.

<sup>212</sup> Cabanes, 1988b, 59–60.

<sup>213</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 217.

## 4.7 Religious connections between Dodona and the rest of Greece

The Greek world, including colonies, was connected in various ways, including migration, commerce and politics. Although a bit isolated in the Archaic Age, Epirus became part of the development of the Hellenic world from the Classical period onwards. Over the centuries, people from all parts visited Dodona, mainly to consult the oracle. One may assume that the sanctuary was eventually fully integrated into the Greek culture. While this may apply generally, there is also evidence of stronger relationships with certain regions. In this section, I will focus on the three most famous cases –Boiotia, Athens, and Olympia– and analyze to what degree they might have influenced the development of Dodona.

### 4.7.1 Boiotia

This chapter has shown some of the ways that Epirus, especially Dodona, was connected to Boiotia. Whether this corresponds to an ancient tie or not is the topic of this section. A few scholars have spotted the following connections: the origin of the name Boiotia and its inhabitants bears a striking resemblance to Mount Boios in the Pindus range; many toponyms are held in common by Boiotia, Epirus, and Illyria; there are links to Dodonaean cults and myths; the locality of Dodona was called Hellopia, a name present also in the mountain area of Dolopia and near the center of Thespieae; Thessalians moved to the region that would later become Boiotia in the 12th century.<sup>214</sup> If there is a real connection between these two populations, it is possible that the unstable situation at the end of the Mycenaean period would have caused the migration of communities from Epirus to Boiotia, a phenomenon that would leave traces. On the other hand, such coincidences in historical times may be due to other kind of contacts, such as commerce or, perhaps more likely, to create ancestral bonds in later times for political and identity reasons.

In the case of Dodona, Valdés Guía recalls the possible connection of the name of the peleíades with the Mycenaean term *pe-re-wi-jo*, probably “priest of the dove”, attested in a tablet from Thebes.<sup>215</sup> However, there is no reference to the peleíades before Herodotus. More reliable is the rite of the *tripodephoria*. The tripod was one of the most valued objects consecrated to the gods; they symbolized victory, competition and everything warlike.<sup>216</sup> Their significance is even more evident in Boiotia, since it is the region for which sources provide the most information concerning tri-

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<sup>214</sup> Hammond, 1976, 41–143; Roesch, 1987, 376–377; Corvisier, 1991, 117–118. Hammond even suggested a route from northwestern Greece to Boiotia, through Thessaly.

<sup>215</sup> Valdés Guía, 2005, 94–95, n. 24.

<sup>216</sup> Polignac, 1984, 35–36.

Pods.<sup>217</sup> It is thus not surprising that they periodically sent one to a sanctuary that employed this object in oracular consultation. However, since Delphi too used a tripod, there were probably more reasons. Piccinini dates the origin of this ritual to the last quarter of the 5th century, when the Boiotian *Koinon* was active. All the Boiotian communities would have been involved in this ritual, thereby contributing to the unity of the collective.<sup>218</sup>

Strabo wrote that, in Dodona, women were in charge of all consultations except those of the Boiotians, a task reserved for men.<sup>219</sup> While it is important to note that this author mixes different theories concerning the personnel of the sanctuary and the way the oracle functioned, the passage does align with the alleged cause of the *tripodephoria*, the assassination of one of the three peleïades by the Boiotians.<sup>220</sup>

An interesting ritual was celebrated in the Boiotian *polis* of Potniae. There they prepared a sacred space called Megara and placed some piglets inside in honor of Demeter and Kore. According to Pausanias, these animals appeared in Dodona the following year.<sup>221</sup> As Schachter states, the reference is strange and Pausanias himself is skeptic, finishing his description with “some others will believe this story”.<sup>222</sup> On the other hand, there must be some explanation for this account. Why Dodona? There was no cult of Demeter or Kore in the sanctuary. It might be due to reminiscences of a common past, the supposed migrations. If this is right, it would be a very old tradition and would imply an active cult in Dodona during the Late Bronze Age and beginning of the Dark Age, perhaps connected to fertility, since ritual consecration of piglets or pigs was typical of the Thesmophoria.<sup>223</sup>

The oracle of Dodona recommended pilgrims to make sacrifices to Achelous after consultation, at least during the time of Ephorus in the 4th century. Interestingly, one of the few cases of a cult to the river-god is attested in Boiotia in the sanctuary of Amphiareion. The reliefs of the main altar depicted several divinities, among them Achelous. Pilgrims performing a sacrifice at the altar dedicated the victim to all of these gods and goddesses.<sup>224</sup> While suggestive, it is unlikely that this rite was connected to the one in Dodona, but rather to the symbolic meaning of Achelous as a “frontier god”. Oropos, at the border between Boiotia and Attica, may have enhanced this fact.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Papalexandrou, 2008, 277.

<sup>218</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 101–111. The Italian scholar also suggests that the explanation of the origin of the *tripodephoria* as a punishment for the murder of a peleïade by the Boiotians could come from Athens, as a way of showing its rivals as impious.

<sup>219</sup> Str., Fr. 7, 1b = Eust., *Hom.* 1760, 40–45.

<sup>220</sup> Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F119 (cf. Str., 9, 2, 4).

<sup>221</sup> Paus., 9, 8, 1.

<sup>222</sup> Schachter, 1986, 159.

<sup>223</sup> Burkert, 1985, 242.

<sup>224</sup> Paus., 1, 34, 3–5.

<sup>225</sup> Friese, 2010, 367.

There is proof of other types of bonds with Boiotia, which belonged to the realms of daily life and politics. An inscription found in this sanctuary, records the concession of *proxenia* to Simaios, a Boiotian.<sup>226</sup> Likewise, the poet Pindar, whose close relationship with the Molossian royal court is well known,<sup>227</sup> hailed from Boiotian Thebes.

The compilation of references concerning reciprocal activities between Dodona and Boiotia shows a certain predilection for archaism. I do not want to deny the possibility that contacts were already present in the Dark Age, but it seems to me that the phenomenon is best explained as a conscious attempt to linking both places to one another in the Classical period. Perhaps the Boiotian *Koinon* included these sorts of acts and rites and revitalized those ancient stories as a way to reinforce the internal bonds and the common identity of all the members of the federal state.

#### 4.7.2 Athens

Athens and Epirus had continuous political contacts since at least the Classical period, when Admetus hosted Themistokles<sup>228</sup> and Tharyps grew up in the Attic *polis*.<sup>229</sup> Arybas himself went into exile there.<sup>230</sup> The striking of the first Molossian coins in the early 4th century with the Attic-Euboic weight standard is another proof of this close tie. Moreover, the Athenians deposited a plaque in Dodona to commemorate their victory over the Peloponnesians ca. 429.<sup>231</sup> It is possible that Delphi's pro-Spartan position during this period<sup>232</sup> influenced Athens relationship to the Epirote shrine which included several cultural and religious exchanges.

Athenians worshipped Zeus Naios and Dione in the Acropolis, as epigraphy attests.<sup>233</sup> The altar for this cult was located near the Erechtheion.<sup>234</sup> The eastern façade of the Parthenon, in fact, depicts Dione between Leto and Aphodite.<sup>235</sup> The cult might date to the period of the Peloponnesian War, during which ties between Athens and

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226 C16.

227 Kowalzig, 2007, 329.

228 Thuc., 1, 136–137; Nep., *Them.* 8, 3; Plut., *Them.* 24, 2; Aristodem., *FGrHis* 104 F10, 1–2; Aristid., *Four*, 383.

229 Iust., *Ep.* 17, 3, 10.

230 Tod *GHI*, 2, 173.

231 *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 73.

232 Arnush, 2006, 102.

233 Mainly *BE* 1917, 415; Baslez, 1999, 391 ss.; Palagia, 2002, 171–180. According to Piccinini, this epigraph was part of a stele that registered the Athenian citizenship of Alketas I from Molossia (2015b, 472–473). Other documents are IG II<sup>2</sup>, 5113; IG II<sup>2</sup>, 4643; IG II<sup>2</sup>, 4707.

234 Elderkin, 1941, 122–123.

235 Valdés Guía, 2005, 115, n. 100.

Dodona begin to grow tighter.<sup>236</sup> Whether the emergence of this cult is directly due to the contact with Dodona has yet to be proven.<sup>237</sup>

The bond between Athens and the cult of Dione in Dodona, in spite of the efforts of Olympias, was firmly established in the 4th century.<sup>238</sup> The oracle of Dodona seems to have ordered the Athenians to restore and decorate the statue of cult of the goddess, which probably reflects the sanctuary's desire to consolidate this tie. As argued above, it does not seem that Athens purposefully avoided contacts with Delphi, since we know of Athenian dedications at the Phocian shrine in the decade of 330.<sup>239</sup> What we see here is an active policy to strengthen contacts with northwestern Greece through Dodona. This might have had secondary effects, such as the surfacing of the name Dione as Διώνη in some cases. According to Lhôte the Athenians may have introduced this alternative name of Διώνη after Δημήτηρ.<sup>240</sup>

One last aspect to consider is the cult of Bendis, a Thracian goddess of martial nature,<sup>241</sup> that arrived in Attica in the 5th century. 429 was the first year of the celebration of the Bendidaea in Athens in the Piraeus.<sup>242</sup> As Garland explains, this festival was created in response to a crisis in the *polis*, the plague during the Peloponnesian War, as a way of restoring stability. The strategic importance of Thrace with its many resources and Athenian colonies were a decisive factor.<sup>243</sup> The role of Dodona here is laid bare in an inscription found in the Attic *polis*.<sup>244</sup> It refers to an oracular consultation for the preparation of a cult space for Bendis in Athens and the organization of a procession. The document dates to 263–262, although the consultation was probably earlier, perhaps ca. 413–412.<sup>245</sup> Not only is this the period immediately after the training and formation of Tharyps in Athens, but it is also easy to understand why the Athenians would have consulted Dodona for this kind of purpose, the introduction of a new cult in the *polis*.

### 4.7.3 Olympia

Olympia and Dodona were both sanctuaries of Zeus, a fact that some scholars have noted and expanded upon. We will examine their theories and reasoning for connecting the two shrines in this section. The main link proposed is the supposed origin of

<sup>236</sup> Parke, 1967, 70, n. 40; Tzouvara-Souli, 2004, 541.

<sup>237</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 137–138.

<sup>238</sup> Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24–26.

<sup>239</sup> Scott, 2010, 132.

<sup>240</sup> Lhôte, 2006, 420–422.

<sup>241</sup> Garland, 1992, 112.

<sup>242</sup> Planeaux, 2000–2001, 182–183. This means that the cult existed in a smaller scale previously (Parker, 1996, 172).

<sup>243</sup> Garland, 1992, 112.

<sup>244</sup> *IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 1283.

<sup>245</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 138–140.



the cult of Zeus at Dodona due to Elean colonization of the region. It is theoretically possible that Elean colonizers would have brought their cult to Dodona. However, I have already supported the recent hypothesis of Domínguez, who rejects such colonization. There is no clear proof of Elean colonization on Epirote shore. Yet, even if there was, I do not find it feasible that the new settlers would have had enough influence to transform the cult activity in Dodona, located far away in the hinterland. The process would have required much more time and the mention of Dodonaean Zeus in the Homeric poems seems to point to a firmly established cult at Dodona during this very period of colonization.

It is true that since the end of the 8th century there are similarities in the types of offerings found in both sanctuaries, such as the figurines of “Warrior Zeus”<sup>246</sup>, Zeus Keraunios,<sup>247</sup> and set of almost identical fibula.<sup>248</sup> Tripods also appear as Olympic votives, outfitted with horse-shaped handles.<sup>249</sup> A helmet deposited in Dodona and dated to ca. 600 bears the inscription ΟΛΥΜΠΙ.<sup>250</sup> These objects show a clear tie between both places, which can best be explained not by colonization, but by the fact that both of sites were sanctuaries of Zeus.

The oracular activity offers a tantalizing document, an inscription mentioning Zeus several times with different epithets, among them Naïos and Olympian.<sup>251</sup> This document is one of the most complete oracular responses and instructs the consultant to make offerings and sacrifices to particular deities. Curiously, the anonymous author of an *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* of uncertain date wrote that, in Dodona, Zeus was not Naïos but Olympian.<sup>252</sup> We might imagine that this is a play on words that highlights the connection between Dodona and Olympia, or maybe a way for Dodona to assimilate the importance of the Elean shrine. I shall add that Thrasybulus of Elis erected a statue of Pyrrhus I in Olympia.<sup>253</sup> This person came from the Elean line of the Iamides, which had many connections with Epirus.<sup>254</sup>

#### 4.7.4 Dodona outside her frontiers

There are no doubts that Dodona and Epirus were connected to other regions of the Hellenic world. Mythical traditions, politics, and cultic similarities evince a few of these links. It is difficult to confirm the migration to Boiotia at the beginning of

<sup>246</sup> Dieterle, 2007, 180–181.

<sup>247</sup> Dakaris, 1973, 154; Himmelmann, 2001, 175.

<sup>248</sup> Hammond, 1967, 429.

<sup>249</sup> Himmelmann, 2001, 165–166 and 179.

<sup>250</sup> SEG XXXVII, 514.

<sup>251</sup> LOD 142.

<sup>252</sup> POxy 4306, fr.I, col.1, l.27–29; cf. Quantin, 2008, 31.

<sup>253</sup> Paus., 6, 14, 9.

<sup>254</sup> Parke, 1967, 179; Dakaris, 1971a, 161–162.

the Dark Age. Coincidence of toponyms is not always a reliable argument and it is quite possible that, being aware of these ancient stories, a conscious effort was made to enhance them in historical times. In the case of Athens, the expansionist trend of the *polis* and the Peloponnesian War led her to seek alliances in more distant lands like the Molossian kingdom. As a result of this, the development of religious activity in Dodona was influenced by the Attic *polis*. With respect to Olympia, the untenable theory of the Elean colonization forces us to conclude that the similarities and coincidences between these two places were due to their being sanctuaries of Zeus.

This section has excluded other territories with which Epirus had common bonds, albeit more superficial ones that did not affect the development of Dodona. One case is Thessaly, supposedly linked to Epirus through early population movements, so much so that a myth placed the foundation of Dodona first in Thessaly, claiming a move to Epirus at a later date.<sup>255</sup> The *Catalogue of the Ships* mentions the shrine in relation to the Thessalians.<sup>256</sup> However, these references to mythical episodes have no specific influence on the evolution of Dodona. Piccinini, who examines this question,<sup>257</sup> does not find any connection between the two regions apart from the commonplace contacts found among neighboring areas.

Two other areas are of note. The first is Italy, as Gagé analyzed in three papers.<sup>258</sup> He focused on the periods of Alexander I and Pyrrhus I, when both Molossian rulers led campaigns in Italic territory. Seeking ties, he argues that there was no direct influence from Dodona, although he sees remnants of an ancient and parallel religious practice.<sup>259</sup> His arguments, however, are rather forced and unreliable. Second, it is critical to analyze the evolution of Delphi, the chief oracle in the Greek world. The great urban growth of Dodona in the Hellenistic period coincides with a certain decline in the Phocian sanctuary. Some scholars have suggested, via different arguments, that there existed a competition between the shrines of Apollo and Zeus.<sup>260</sup> I will return to this question later and examine the way both sanctuaries interacted with one another.

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<sup>255</sup> Suidas, *FGrHis* 602 F 11; Cineas, *FGrHis* 603 F 2 (cf. Str., 7, 7, 12).

<sup>256</sup> Hom., *Il.* 2, 748–752.

<sup>257</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 111–122.

<sup>258</sup> Gagé, 1954a, 1954b and 1954c.

<sup>259</sup> Gagé, 1954a, 160.

<sup>260</sup> Morgan, 1990, 222.

## 5 Entangled Epirus – Paths and communications

### 5.1 Introduction

In order to better understand the evolution of a center, we must take into account its surroundings. The sanctuary of Dodona did not develop as an isolated site, but was entangled in a complex frame of settlements through a variety of phenomena. This chapter aims to analyze the paths and communications, that is to say, the routes that connected the shrine with other places, as well as those sites that played a significant role in the process. Many factors play a part in the political, cultural, social, economic and religious order. Contacts among settlements promote the flow of goods and people, and the transmission and exchange of knowledge. Many changes in Dodona did not appear suddenly and did not have their origin in the sanctuary, but arrived from neighboring places throughout the development of the region. At the same time, paths and communication were at work in the symbolic sphere, generating mental constructions. One's arrival at a site on the way to Dodona could be imbued with special meaning. For example, the landing of a pilgrim in Ambrakos, the starting point of one of the routes leading to the Epirote shrine, certainly had particular connotations.

This chapter will begin with a description of the routes to Dodona and then move on to the main settlements Molossia, with special focus on the religious places. Since this is where Dodona was located, at least since the kingdom began to control it, the contacts were very fluid. The final section will focus on other Epirote enclaves that were important in the development of Dodona.

### 5.2 Routes to Dodona

Reconstructing an itinerary more than two thousand years old is not an easy task. Throughout the world, people have commonly used the same paths over centuries, even millennia. This is also the case with Dodona, but the landscape has changed a lot. What began as a simple trail is now a road or a highway. Depending on the degree of development of the society or the needs to the population, paths were conditioned, adapted or left as they were. Roman engineering was one of the most remarkable achievements of antiquity, constructing *viae* still preserved in some places. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Epirus. During all this time, many routes have disappeared and humanity has created new ones. Modern technologies facilitate the movement of people by allowing them to cross entire mountains with tunnels. This transformation in the landscape has led to the abandonment of some of the traditional routes. For this reason, it is necessary to carefully examine the sources to extract information concerning these itineraries. On some occasions, shepherds can be of great help, since they may still use the secondary paths that crossed mountains

through walkways and valleys, as pilgrims did long ago on their way to Dodona. These routes played a significant role in the structuring of the space.<sup>1</sup> Another useful source comes from war accounts. There are a few studies on the paths that armies followed during campaigns. Their need to move quickly and efficiently often sheds light on the most important routes. Kase and Szemler, for example, have made a noteworthy contribution with their paper focused on the First Sacred War.<sup>2</sup>

Epirus was the nexus between the Greek peninsula and Central Europe. There was already a route in the Bronze Age that connected both areas via the Epirote territory,<sup>3</sup> although one might assume that the communications were more prevalent in the coast due to the more efficient movement afforded by the sea. This is the opinion of Harding, Hughes-Brock and Beck in their paper about the commerce of amber in Mycenaean times from the area of extraction – primarily the Baltic region – to Greece.<sup>4</sup>

Ancient authors provide scarce information concerning this aspect of ancient life. Nevertheless, a few commentaries related to campaigns that took place in the Epirote territory exist. Beaumont, in his analysis of the conflict between Corinth and Kerkyra in the prolegomena of the Peloponnesian War in 435, tried to uncover the optimal routes. According to his account, the Corinthian army had to reach Apollonia but could not do so by sea because the Kerkyraeans controlled the shore. They found a route through the hinterland. Thucydides does not explain how, but Beaumont's hypothesis is convincing: from Ambrakia they went north to the plain where Ioannina stands today. Once there, the army turned northwest, crossing the Drinos valley.<sup>5</sup> The rugged Molossian orography forced them to use the valleys, with the Ioannina plateau provided the main inland crossroad. The *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a map created in Late Antiquity shows the most important routes in the Roman Empire.<sup>6</sup> Two of them crossed Epirus, one following the shore and the other crossing the hinterland. The latter one began in Apollonia, led to Hadrianopolis, continued to Ilio – an unknown site – and ended in Nikopolis. There appears to be a gap between these two settlements and Bowden has suggested Dodona.<sup>7</sup>

More recent episodes are also useful. During the Balkan Wars in 1912–1913, the captain of the English army A. Trapmann talked about a battle that took place near the modern site of Pente Pigadia, 40 km. south of Ioannina. This fight was a complete disaster for the Greek and English troops who were defeated by the Turks. According

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1 Dausse, 2011c, 231.

2 Kase and Szemler, 1984.

3 Poursat, 1987, 32.

4 Harding, Hughes-Brock and Beck, 1978, 153.

5 Beaumont, 1952, 64–65.

6 Greece appears in *Pars VIII*. Available online in *Bibliotheca Augustana Bibliotheca Augustana*, ([http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost03/Tabula/tab\\_pe00.html](http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost03/Tabula/tab_pe00.html); consulted on 02/29/2019).

7 Bowden, 2003, 14–16.

to Trapmann, they took the wrong route. From Arta – modern Ambrakia – to the north there were two options: to follow the Louros Valley or, further east, the Arachtos Valley; both of them are separated by the Xerovouni range, which runs south to north. The officer in charge, General Sapounzaki, chose the eastern route, which, due to its bad condition, made the movement of troops more difficult. Had they used the Louros route, the result might have been different.<sup>8</sup>

These accounts might cast some light on the paths that crossed Epirus and led to Dodona. Hammond was undoubtedly one of the main experts in this field, with a legendary knowledge of the Epirote territory, which he himself had traversed. It is not surprising that his theories about the paths to Dodona are still mostly accepted, though he was not always right. MAP 1 presents a reconstruction of the routes proposed by Hammond, which I will now explain.

MAP 2 presents a simplified reconstruction of the main routes to Dodona in Epirus. The most frequent itinerary started on the shores of the Ambrakian Gulf. This coincides with the only literary reference that refers to a journey to Dodona. Although mythical, in the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus Aeneas and his men traveled from Ambrakia to the shrine in order to consult the oracle. It took them two days to reach the sanctuary.<sup>9</sup> This information confirms that the author knew the route since the distance that separates both sites, ca. 80 km., was a feasible two-day journey for the hero and his men.

The itinerary proposed by Hammond, the easiest and shortest one, began in Kastro Rogoi, after which pilgrims went up the Louros river from the Ambrakian gulf. From this site, identified by Hammond as Boucheta, the path ascended through the Xeropotamos valley and crossed to the upper part of the Acheron valley. The route continued north to the Variades pass, from which the pilgrim descended to the upper section of the Louros valley. The village of Kopani stands in this area today and once gave access to the southern entrance of the Tcharacovitsa valley.<sup>10</sup> The problems with this hypothesis are twofold. First, the identification of some of these sites is probably wrong, as I will explain later. Second, it takes Elean colonization for granted and, therefore, the route that connected some of these sites, such as Kastro Rogoi, Paliorophoron, and Trikastron (supposedly Boucheta, Elatria, and Pandosia, respectively)<sup>11</sup>.

Hammond suggested an alternative route from the south, beginning in Ambrakia. This would have actually been the main one. The itinerary was parallel in the east and it just followed the Louros Valley to the north, stopping over in some settlements, such as Ammotopos/Horraeum, Pente Pigadia, and Moulesi, and finally entering the Ioannina plateau.<sup>12</sup> Once there, the visitor would turn west and cross

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<sup>8</sup> Trapmann, 1913, 511–512.

<sup>9</sup> Dion.Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1, 51, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Hammond, 1997a, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Hammond, 1997a, 16; 1997c, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Hammond, 1997a, 16–18.



**Map 1:** Routes to Dodona according to Hammond (elaborated by the author)

the mountain to reach the sanctuary. The archaeological map composed by Kalpakis for the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina, does not present the exact same itinerary, but rather follows the Louros Valley on its west side, near the course of the river, passing through Bazi Agiou Georgiou and Voulista Panagia.<sup>13</sup> This explains why

<sup>13</sup> Kalpakis, 2008.

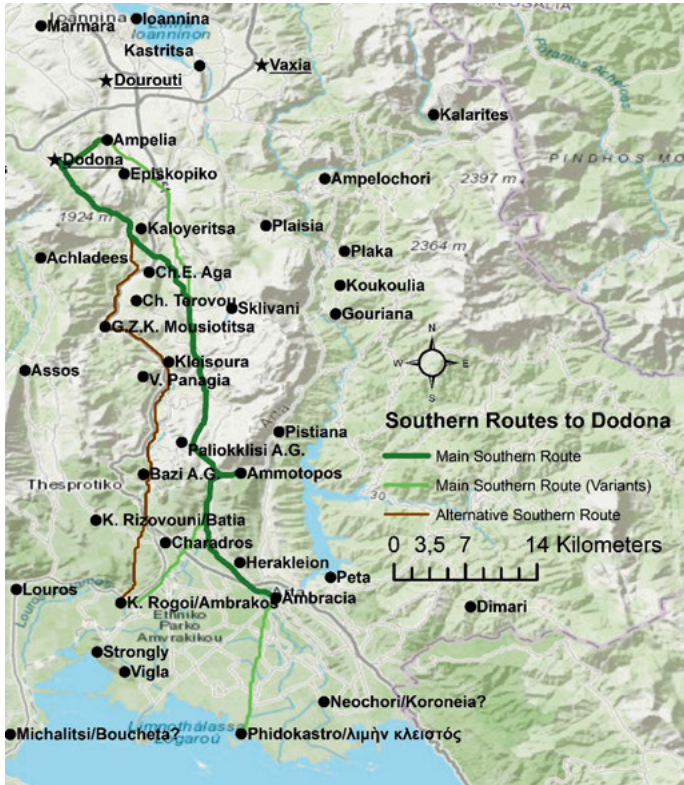




Map 2: Routes to Dodona (elaborated by the author)

there were more settlements in that part of the valley, at least those that were found. However, it seems to me difficult to accept that Ammotopos/Horraeum, the main socio-economic center of this valley, was not located on the most frequented route. Passage in the eastern part of the valley at the level of this site is good, as Hammond states, so it would not be a disadvantage to take that course. Consequently, the maps I have prepared for this book present Ammotopos/Horraeum as a sure point in the itinerary; this is especially the case for MAP 3.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Hammond places the end of the route in the Ioannina plain, but I suggest that pilgrims could have turned west at the height of Kaloyeritsa – probably ancient Phylace – and

<sup>14</sup> Besides, the path automatically generated by ArcGIS, that takes into account variables such as energy effort, shows a slight diversion from west to east, to the area of Ammotopos/Horraeum. Maps 2 and 3 present this, although I have forced a little bit the diversion to clearly connect the center.



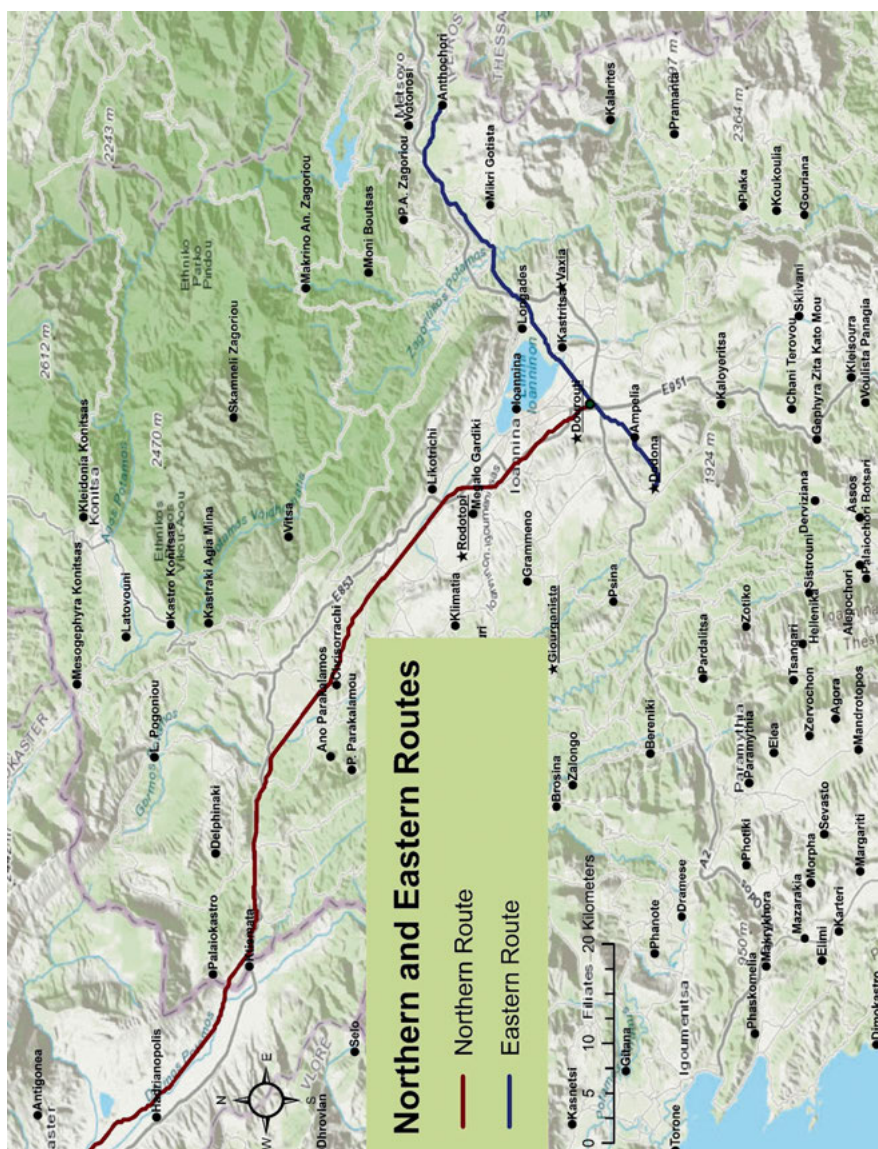
Map 3: Southern routes (elaborated by the author)

reached the area of Kopani, from which it would have been easy to reach Dodona.<sup>15</sup> When Pyrrhus I established the royal court in Ambrakia, the route that connected the new capital to the hinterland of Molossia must have been completely consolidated.

From the north there was another path, apparently less frequented (MAP 4). It started at the Aulon Gulf – present-day Vlorë, in Albania – and crossed the Aoos Valley. From there, it continued to the Drinos Valley heading southeast. There were several options for reaching Despotikon, mainly to go on through the Longovitsa Valley or to follow the Drinos Valley to Ktismata, eventually crossing the Gyftopotamos and finally arriving at Despotikon. Once there, the traveler would have traversed the natural Theogephyro bridge and, from the area of Zitsa, proceed on a clear path to the Ioannina plateau. As Hammond points out, this route was still used in Turkish

<sup>15</sup> Hammond does mention this possibility in an earlier work (Hammond, 1967, 172–173), although without explaining it. For this, see also De Gennaro and Santoriello, (1994, 397) and Piccinini (2012, 27–28).





times,<sup>16</sup> and Melfi has recently shown the consolidation of this internal route through the Drinos Valley during the 3rd and 2nd centuries.<sup>17</sup>

Pilgrims also used a path from the west (MAP 5). As the shores of Epirus in that area are very steep, there are only a few harbors. At first sight, the Glykis Limen

<sup>16</sup> Hammond, 1997a, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Melfi, 2018, 1050.



itude as the Ioannina plain. This is, in fact, one of the main ways to connect both areas in the present day, passing Metsovo. I suggest that those who aimed to visit Dodona from the northeastern part of Greece took mainly this second route (MAP 4). Moreover, this route shows that the sanctuary was near the main crossroads of the Epirote hinterland.

More recently, Dausse and Pliakou have studied the specific paths of Molossia. Both scholars have faced two problems: first, the difficulty of identifying most of the archaeological sites found in this territory, due to the dearth of information in written sources; second, archaeologists have excavated only a few of those centers, which certainly puts a bias on the available information. Nevertheless, their work has provided noteworthy results. Dausse distinguishes six areas – the Ioannina plain, the Thyamis, Louros and Arachtos Valleys, and the mountain ranges of Smolitsas and Tsoumerka.<sup>25</sup> Most of the large settlements were located in high places and were called ἀκροπόλεις.<sup>26</sup> The reason for choosing an elevated position was surely for easier defense and better control of the surroundings. It may also have been important to avoid the floods that the lower areas would have experience during certain periods of the year. It is important to note that the Ioannina plain did not have the lake we can see today, but rather was a marshy region.<sup>27</sup> The distribution of some of the main settlements in Molossia was directly related to the most important routes that crossed the region, as I try to show in MAP 6, which I have drawn based on the indications of Dausse and Pliakou<sup>28</sup> and the calculation of GIS. It is certain that there were different itineraries that connected all the sites in Molossia, from large settlements to hamlets and farms. Shepherding, undoubtedly, played a significant role in this web of paths.

MAP 6 is my attempt to illustrate different theories of how to access the Tcharacovitsa valley on the way to Dodona.<sup>29</sup> The northern path stopped at Dourouti, another sanctuary, and entered the valley through the corridor of Megalo Lagkadi.<sup>30</sup> A shorter alternative involves continuing south from Dourouti until you hit the present-day village of Ampelia located at the same latitude as Dodona. There was a shortcut that allowed the pilgrim to cross the mountain and access the valley by the slopes of Prophet Elias mountain, east-southeast to the sanctuary.<sup>31</sup> The fact that two of the three entrances to the sacred space of Dodona were located on the southern and eastern sides makes sense under this line of reasoning. The main access was most likely the southern one, from which visitors entered between the

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<sup>25</sup> Dausse, 2004, 184.

<sup>26</sup> Pliakou, 2011a, 642.

<sup>27</sup> Pliakou, 2007, 28 and 236.

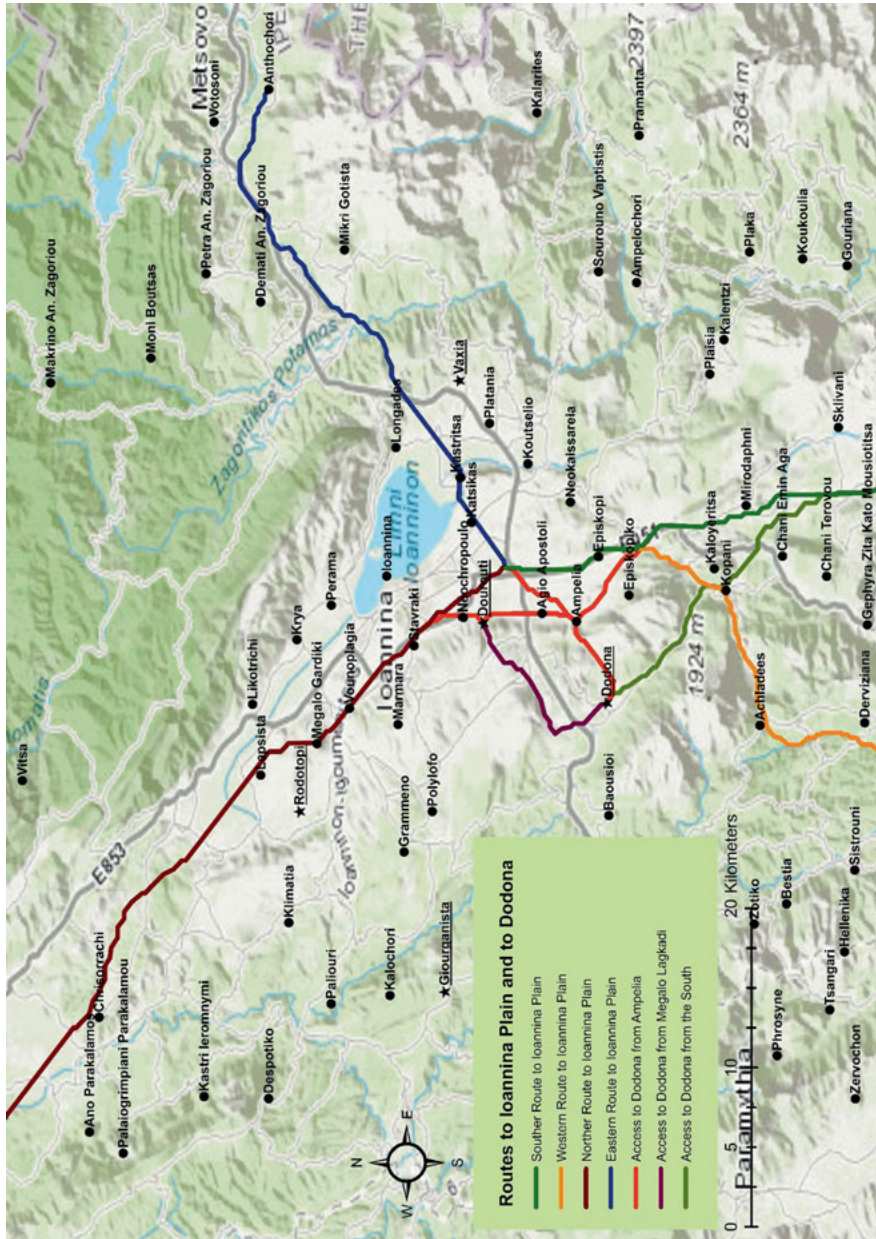
<sup>28</sup> Dausse, 2007; Pliakou, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> I consulted also the works of 19th century travelers that visited the area and went to Dodona from Ioannina. But none of them give a specific description of the itineraries and the few locations names given do not currently exist.

<sup>30</sup> Andréou, 2000, 23; Gravani, 2004, 553; Pliakou, 2007, 244–245.

<sup>31</sup> Pliakou, 2007, 245.





two stoas and saw the temples and treasures before them. As I will explain later, in terms of visibility, this was the best place to access Dodona, and supports the idea that the landscape of Dodona was consciously monumentalized to enhance the importance of some buildings and other elements of the shrine.

On the southern route, starting in Ambrakia, it is likely that Ammotopos/Hor-raeum and Kaloyeritsa/Phylace? were usual stops. Pliakou considers that the journey would continue north and, once in the Ioannina plateau, would turn left at Ampe-lia.<sup>32</sup> However, I also suggest the possibility of heading west beforehand to reach Ko-pani and then to enter the Tcharacovitsa Valley from the south. MAP 6 presents these alternatives, including access from the north through the corridor of Megalo Lagkadi. Since Hammond did not delineate the specific path to Dodona, MAP 1 takes into account the one most common in his time, the northern one.

### 5.3 The area of Molossia

Archaeologists have identified 58 fortified settlements and a variety of smaller sites in the ca. 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> that cover this region. This confirms the urbanization rate of Epirus, though Thesprotia was more densely populated with 44 settlements in its 2,000 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>33</sup> The *polis* phenomenon did not reach the hinterland until the Hellenistic age. Gradually, rural enclaves became larger villages and developed into towns that controlled the *komai* and farms in their surroundings maintaining an organization based on *ethne*. Each settlement and its *chora* constituted the smallest degree of the ethnic identity; the association of several of these sites shaped a broader *ethnos*, which came together to form one of the big *ethne*, namely the Molossian, Thesprotian, and Chaonian.

#### 5.3.1 Minor sanctuaries

At least four more religious sites have been identified in Molossia, Dourouti, Rodotopi, Vaxia and Giourganista. One expects that the total number was actually higher. Nevertheless, the known cases are an important source of information about the connections between the Molossian shrines and their evolution in the overall development of Epirus. As this work is focused on Dodona, I will only briefly examine the other sanctuaries. MAP 6 displays the location of these shrines, marking them out with a star and underlined names.

**Dourouti** is situated near the University of Ioannina, on the mountain slope. Archaeologists discovered the site after torrents disturbed the area and carried out an urgent excavation in 1976. The place functioned both as a necropolis and a sanctuary. Based principally on the graves the shrine appears to have been active from the Archaic to the Classical period;<sup>34</sup> some remains, however, date to at least the 9th cen-

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 245 and σχ. 26.

<sup>33</sup> Dausse, 2007, 205.

<sup>34</sup> Gravani, 2004, 550.

ture.<sup>35</sup> The site was divided into two parts, each one with a circular building and other structures.<sup>36</sup> The material finds include female terracotta figurines bearing either a torch or a phiale, as well as several molds used in their manufacture. We also find vessels and other bronze and iron objects.<sup>37</sup> The quality of the grave goods suggests that the individuals buried there were likely of high status.<sup>38</sup> Bodies were accompanied by metal vases, weapons and jewels,<sup>39</sup> many from outside Epirus.<sup>40</sup> Most interesting among the artefacts found in these burials are 25 strigils and five flute mouths.<sup>41</sup> It seems possible that Dourouti was the preferred cemetery for the local elites.<sup>42</sup>

Scholars generally support the theory that Demeter and Kore were worshiped at Dourouti. Apart from the female statuettes, a bronze plaque was found depicting both goddesses bearing a torch and a scepter.<sup>43</sup> This led Andréou to interpret the circular buildings as the Thesmophoria of Demeter.<sup>44</sup> Beside one of these structures there was a pit containing only stones, instead of the votives, bones and coal that expect to find in a thesmophorion. Andréou suggests that it might have been abandoned once everything from the inside was removed after the last celebration took place.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, she links the strigils with the cult of Demeter,<sup>46</sup> although we should consider the possibility of agonistic competitions. Andréou also sees elements of the cult to the Cabeiri, mainly the metal votives, which are not commonly associated with the cult of Demeter.<sup>47</sup> However, I have not found any evidence for these kinds of offerings being indispensable elements of this cult. While it is true that the sanctuary of the Cabeiri in Thebes has yielded 562 lead and bronze statuettes, most of them depict bulls, which is not the case for Dourouti.<sup>48</sup> In short, I reject Andréou's hypothesis. Moreover, with regard to Demeter and Kore, it is important to note that statuettes of women bearing torches are also common votives for other goddess, such as Artemis, Athena, Hera<sup>49</sup> and Hekate.<sup>50</sup> Thus, confirmation of a cult to Demeter and Kore must come from a different set of evidence. In the case of Dour-

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35 Andréou, 2004, 569.

36 *Ibidem*, 569.

37 *Ibidem*, 570 and 575–577.

38 Gravani, 2004, 557.

39 Andréou, 2000, 33.

40 *Ibidem*, 33.

41 Andréou, 1981, 138–146.

42 Gravani, 2004, 560.

43 Pliakou, 2010, 417.

44 *Ibidem*, 416.

45 Andréou, 2004, 570. This explanation, however, is not fully supported.

46 *Ibidem*, 578.

47 *Ibidem*, 577.

48 Bremmer, 2014, 37–45.

49 Cronkite, 1997, 195–198.

50 Werth, 2006, 153–165

outi, I am in support of the hypothesis that Demeter, who is depicted on the bronze plaque, was worshipped at this place, since this deity was commonly associated with limits and boundaries.<sup>51</sup> It is probably no mere coincidence that the site also functioned as a necropolis, for burials are common elements of territorial demarcation.<sup>52</sup>

The proposed date for the abandonment of the shrine, in the 3rd century, is telling.<sup>53</sup> It coincides with the period of major activity in Dodona and the construction of the sanctuary of **Rodotopi**. Perhaps the emergence of a new cult space occasioned the decline of the older one.<sup>54</sup> Located in the immediate vicinity of the fortified settlement of Megalo Gardiki, the shrine has a temple built in the 4th century<sup>55</sup> or beginning of the 3rd.<sup>56</sup> We have already seen that the Molossian monarchs, at least in times of Pyrrhus and Neoptolemus II, performed an oath with sacrifices in honor of Zeus Areios in Passaron.<sup>57</sup> Megalo Gardiki has traditionally been identified as this site, theoretically the capital of the kingdom, partly due to the presence of Rodotopi, which historians have identified as the temple of Zeus Areios.<sup>58</sup> This building endured well into the Roman Empire, as coins found in the site attest. The structure was turned from a Hellenistic prostyle *naiskos* into a Roman peripteral temple<sup>59</sup> which housed the statue of an emperor.<sup>60</sup> In 1946 Cook published a relief, supposedly from Rodotopi, which an individual had donated to the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina.<sup>61</sup> The piece portrays a young man riding a chariot with two lions. It bears the inscription: Ἀρὰ τῷ Διὶ οὗ βέλο[ς] δίίπτατ[αι] or Ἀρατῷ Διὶ οὗ βέλο[ς] δίίπτατ[αι].<sup>62</sup> The rider could perhaps be a representation of Zeus Areios.<sup>63</sup>

Archaeologists discovered more inscriptions, some of them dealing with politics, probably in the context of the Epirote *Koinon*,<sup>64</sup> as well as dedications to Artemis Hegemona.<sup>65</sup> The votive offerings included three fragments of female terracottas that remained unpublished until very recently. A few years ago new figurines of this kind – one of them bearing a torch – came to light in the excavation of a nearby building. These findings led Pliakou to suggest an alternative hypothesis concerning the

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51 Cardete del Olmo, 2010, 88–89. Hekate, on the other hand, also deals with frontiers, so it should not be discarded.

52 Grau Mira, 2012, 231.

53 Gravani, 2004, 564.

54 Andréou, 2004, 580.

55 Hammond, 1967, 576.

56 Pliakou, 2011b, 96. For a discussion of the site's earlier structures, see Hammond, 1967, 183.

57 Plut., *Pyrrh.* 5, 5.

58 Hammond, 1967, 576–577.

59 Mancini, 2018.

60 Hammond, 1967, 183.

61 Cook, 1946, 112.

62 For the theories concerning both readings, see Burzacchini, 1997.

63 Hammond, 1967, 576; Burzacchini, 1999, 127.

64 Pliakou, 2011b, 96.

65 C29.

site. There is no material evidence, she points out, of a cult of Zeus Areios, since the origin of the relief is uncertain. Moreover, the worship of Artemis Hegemona fits better with the archaeological remains.<sup>66</sup> In fact, all the inscriptions date to the period of the *Koinon*, when there was no longer monarchy. It is, therefore, not clear that we can associate the political and administrative role of Rodotopi during that period with the oath to Zeus Areios mentioned above.<sup>67</sup> We cannot discard, however, that Artemis Hegemona shared the temple with Zeus Areios, since both are war gods. However, this is less likely.

We may confirm based on its close proximity that the temple of Rodotopi was connected to the settlement of Megalo Gardiki as an extra-urban sanctuary. Its construction in the 4th century was one of the consequences – and features – of the urban development of the region at the time. The erection of such a building brought about a reconfiguration of the religious networks in the area. Thus, Rodotopi grew in significance for the local elites, while Dodona broadened its scope to include the entire kingdom of Molossia, the Alliance and, finally, the Epirote *Koinon*. The presence of documents in Rodotopi concerning the federal state implies that the site also played a significant role in this context.

The third sanctuary, **Vaxia**, was mainly active from the 5th-2nd centuries and was located in the western part of the Ioannina plain, near the Thessalian route. It was discovered in 1939 and Soulis led excavations there that were never published. Understandably, the available information is very scarce and fragmentary. The most important materials were, unsurprisingly, female terracotta figurines of various types. Hammond interpreted some of them as representing Aphrodite due to their features and linked others, dated to the 5th century and Hellenistic period, with Demeter.<sup>68</sup> As Tzouvara-Souli highlights, those figurines understood as depictions of Aphrodite likely portray the dedicants themselves. Moreover, as some of the statuettes had torches over their breasts, she identified them with Artemis or Hekate.<sup>69</sup> Needless to say, torches are also symbols of Demeter and Kore<sup>70</sup> and the argument is not definitive. Another element, however, may tip the scale in favor of Hekate. The goddess is a well-known protector of paths (*Monoprosopos*) and crossroads (*Triprosopos*).<sup>71</sup> Vaxia is situated the crossroads of Epirus, which converge in the Ioannina plateau. The sanctuary may have been associated with the protection of the people that went down these routes.

Although almost unknown, we must add one more religious space. A few years ago, archaeologists excavated the site of **Giourganista**, near the village of Kourenta.

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<sup>66</sup> Pliakou, 2010, 417–418 and n. 114. For a more complete commentary on this and its connection with an oracular response in Dodona, see Chapinal-Heras (2018).

<sup>67</sup> Pliakou, 2011b, 92–96.

<sup>68</sup> Hammond, 1967, 179–180. Tzouvara-Souli considers all of them Hellenistic (1979, 34, 57 and 81).

<sup>69</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 1979, 34 and 57.

<sup>70</sup> Werth, 2006, 156.

<sup>71</sup> Villalba Babiloni, 2015, 399–410.



Several clay figurines appeared, as well as, again, female terracotta heads, and an inscription dating to the Hellenistic. Zachos has interpreted the site as a sanctuary.<sup>72</sup> I support the identification of Giourganista as a new shrine for the Molossian region. The kind of offerings found here point to a goddess cult, since there are clear correspondences with the materials unearthed in the other cities.

A quick analysis of the landmarks just cited is testament to the fact that the distribution of cult centers in Epirus was not random. It was always connected to the organization of the territory, to the way communities lived and interacted among themselves. We can discern two different categories, those that were local or regional, such as Dourouti, Rodotopi, Vaxia and Giourganista; and those that had a major purview, i.e., Dodona, whose importance surpassed the frontiers of Molossia and Epirus. Since the population that inhabited this region was organized into *ethne*, each one of them would have at least one common cult place. These sites would have articulated the territory, the frontiers of the *ethnos*, contributing to the development of these people in the religious, social, and political spheres. They defined, therefore, the Molossian subethnical boundaries.

If we pay attention to the diachronic development of these sites, there is a clear evolution taking place. The oldest shrine was Dourouti. Its abandonment during the 3rd century, when Rodotopi (4th century) was already active, is not a coincidence. The emergence of new cult places, such as Vaxia, Rodotopi, and Giourganista in the Classical period, and especially the Hellenistic, entailed the transformation of already existing networks. During this long process, new places surfaced while older ones declined, in the same way that these communities and *ethne* experienced a change in their own system of organization. The expansion of the Molossian royal court doubtlessly played a significant role in this phenomenon.

### 5.3.2 Settlements

The first place to mention is **Megalo Gardiki**. Scholars have usually considered Passaron to be the capital of the Molossian kingdom primarily because of the oath that monarchs performed there<sup>73</sup> and because it was one of the four centers – apparently the most powerful ones – that attempted to resist Roman attack in 167.<sup>74</sup> Given the size and features of this archaeological site, one of the largest in the Molossian territory, it makes sense to identify Megalo Gardiki with Passaron. The proximity of the sanctuary of Rodotopi, as we have seen, is another argument in support of this theory. It is important to note, however, that Passaron has not been confirmed as Megalo Gardiki, as this center is only mentioned in our literary sources.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Zachos, 2010, 346–347 and εικ. 16.

<sup>73</sup> Plut., *Pyrrh.* 5, 5.

<sup>74</sup> Livy, 45, 26, 4–10.

<sup>75</sup> Pliakou, 2011a, 643.

The settlement has 1,500 m. of walls,<sup>76</sup> with the earliest dating to the last decades of the 4th century or the beginning of the 3rd. It was inhabited until the Ottoman period, although permanent occupation ceased in the 3rd century CE. One of its major periods of development seems to have taken place in the final quarter of the 3rd century BCE.<sup>77</sup> Excavations carried out in recent years have uncovered five large building complexes, cataloged as A, B, Γ, Δ and E. Most of the remains are from Roman times, but some date to the Hellenistic period, especially Building E, which was not reused after the Roman conquest in 167.<sup>78</sup>

The uncertainty concerning the location of Passaron has led Pliakou to propose an alternative theory that takes into consideration all of the available data, without avoiding those materials most difficult to explain. Let us now turn to the Ioannina plain, where the **castle of Ioannina** currently stands. This city, the capital of the modern administrative region of Epirus, has had an enduring existence. Near the shore of the Pamvotis lake, in the historical center of the town, there is a citadel with a castle that was probably erected during the Byzantine period.<sup>79</sup> For decades, any material found here was dated to Byzantine or later times. However, the physical evidence supports the theory of a previous settlement in this area.<sup>80</sup> These materials included buildings whose remains are below the levels of the Byzantine structures, some of them dating from at least the 5th century BCE.<sup>81</sup> There is also the case of the site's earliest numismatic finding, a Macedonian silver diobol from the end of the 6th century or beginning of the 5th. Since this sort of coin was in use for a very short time, it functions as a particularly good chronological reference. In fact, the presence of coins in various spots, together with other materials, shows that the settlement was spread over the inner area of the modern city, not just the citadel.<sup>82</sup> Another piece of hard evidence in support of Pliakou's hypothesis is the recent discovery of a clay plaque in the city. The piece depicts a man with a cuirass riding a chariot with lions. One might connect this plaque to the relief thought to depict Zeus Areios found in Rodotopi. The relief was donated by an individual from Ioannina who claimed to have discovered it in Rodotopi, but it would be unsurprising if it actually came from the city. Based on the evidence given above, Pliakou suggests that Passaron was located at the site of present-day Ioannina.<sup>83</sup> The available data from Ioannina is still too scarce to confirm this proposal. The location, in fact, an occasionally

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<sup>76</sup> Dausse, 2007, 206.

<sup>77</sup> Pliakou, 2015, 15–17; 2018, 699; Kyrkou, 2018, 673–674.

<sup>78</sup> Pliakou, 2015, 24–29; 2018, 701–702.

<sup>79</sup> Pliakou, 2011b, 97–99.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, 97–99.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, 99–104. As Pliakou explains, it is possible that there was a small settlement here already in the Bronze Age.

<sup>82</sup> Liampi, 2012, 6–21.

<sup>83</sup> Pliakou, 2011b, 106–107.

marshy plain,<sup>84</sup> might not be the most suitable for such an important center. The climate of the area notwithstanding, the theory seems rather apt. There is no doubt that the site was important, and it surely controlled the crossroads where so many routes converged. Moreover, Plutarch refers to the ritual oath the kings had to perform in the sanctuary of Zeus Areios in Passaron as an old tradition. If it was so during the joint reign of Neoptolemus II and Pyrrhus I, the chronology of the fortifications of Megalo Gardiki and the erection of the temple of Rodotopi (end of 4th to 3rd century) does not match the description. The evidence of a permanent settlement in the area of Ioannina by the 5th century would be a better fit.

Before the southern entrance of the Ioannina plain, there is an archaeological site known as **Kaloyeritsa**, still unexcavated, but often mentioned regarding the routes that crossed Epirus. The area is covered by trees and bushes, but it is not difficult to discern the walls of buildings and the outline of the fortification. Its perimeter had a length of 1,250 m.<sup>85</sup> and the defense structure dates to the 3rd century.<sup>86</sup> The remarkable dimensions of the area led Dausse to suggest that it may have been the ancient city of Phylace, mentioned by Livy.<sup>87</sup> Another site, Paliouri, to the northwest to the plateau, is another viable candidate.<sup>88</sup> Independent of its identification as Phylace, Kaloyeritsa undoubtedly played an important role in the route from Ambra-kia to the north, likely one of the last stops before reaching the sanctuary of Dodona.

Another noteworthy site, located near a crossroads in the Ioannina plain, is **Kas-tritsa**, identified as ancient Tekmon.<sup>89</sup> It stands on the top of a hill in the southern part of the basin. The presence of Neolithic and Bronze Age materials in the slopes<sup>90</sup> suggests that the inhabitants of the area decided at some point to move to a higher and safer place. The fortified site would have also served as an administrative center and afforded refuge for the *komai* and farms spread throughout the area.<sup>91</sup> Archaeologists are still excavating the site, but have so far discovered a few Hellenistic structures that were in use until the 6th century CE, which provides evidence for at least one millennium of activity.<sup>92</sup> The time frame coincides with other findings of the 7th and 6th centuries,<sup>93</sup> although recent research links the foundation of the permanent settlement in the acropolis to the 3rd century during the time of king Pyr-

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<sup>84</sup> Pliakou, 2007, 28.

<sup>85</sup> Hammond, 1967, 659.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, 668.

<sup>87</sup> Livy, 45, 26, 4 and 10.

<sup>88</sup> Dausse, 2007, 212–214.

<sup>89</sup> Pliakou, 2011a, 642. According to Hammond, on the other hand, it was Eurymenae, a center mentioned by Diodorus (19, 88, 4; cf. Hammond, 2000, 348).

<sup>90</sup> Gravani, 2004, 551.

<sup>91</sup> Pliakou, 2011a, 642.

<sup>92</sup> Karatzeni, 2001, 166.

<sup>93</sup> Hammond, 1967, 441.

thus.<sup>94</sup>Based on its prime location, it is reasonable to think that Kastritsa was one of the most powerful settlements in Molossia.

The last of the four large centers of this territory is **Ammotopos**, in the Louros Valley. This is the only case where we can positively identify a center with one of the sites mentioned by Livy, Horraeum,<sup>95</sup> thanks to an inscription that preserves a treaty between Ambrakia and Charadros concerning their frontiers, which included Horraeum. Since Ammotopos is the settlement nearest to the north of Ambrakia, it makes sense to identify it as Horraeum.<sup>96</sup> Archaeologists excavated the site in the 1970s,<sup>97</sup> but no monograph has been published to date. However, the materials published provide enough evidence to confirm that it was fortified with a 1,100 m. wall and that it had buildings, such as a theater, demonstrating a remarkable development. The structures are dated mostly to the 4th and 3rd centuries.<sup>98</sup> There is perhaps evidence for a cult to Apollo Agyeios on the site, since his main icon, the baetyl, is depicted on a tile.<sup>99</sup>

The location of Ammotopos/Horraeum was very important. In the context of Molossian expansion in the 4th century, the kingdom sought access to the sea through conquest of areas with shores on the Ambrakian Gulf. The need for reliable communication between the hinterland – the area of the Ioannina plain – and the south means that Ammotopos/Horraeum was certainly an important site for the expansion of the Molossian kingdom, especially after Pyrrhus moved the royal court to Ambrakia.<sup>100</sup>

This section has examined the possible locations of the chief Molossian settlements cited by Livy. There is one other site, however, whose significance for the development of Epirus makes it invaluable for understanding the emergence of the sanctuary and other aspects related to the polyfunctionality of Dodona. To appreciate it more fully, we must go back in time. **Vitsa**, mentioned already, was situated to the northwest of the Ioannina plateau, en route to the Drinos valley. This place was, along with Dodona, the most important Epirote site in the Geometric period. At that time the traffic of people and goods was mainly internal or confined within the northern and eastern regions.<sup>101</sup>

Shepherds surely played a role in the use and consolidation of the Vitsa route during the first centuries of the millennium as is evidenced by the numerous bones found, most of them of caprids and cattle.<sup>102</sup> Although it is also possible to

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<sup>94</sup> Yiouni, Faklari and Kappa, 2018, 706.

<sup>95</sup> Dausse, 2007, 198.

<sup>96</sup> Cabanes and Andréou, 1985, 520 – 523.

<sup>97</sup> Kalpakis, 2012, 110.

<sup>98</sup> Hammond, 1967, esp. 139.

<sup>99</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 68 – 69.

<sup>100</sup> Polyb., 21, 30, 9.

<sup>101</sup> Domínguez, 2015, 121.

<sup>102</sup> Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 294.

interpret the bones in a ritual context, the fact that they appear throughout the whole site instead of a specific spot points to pastoral activity. Moreover, archaeologists have reported 178 burials distributed between two areas next to the settlement from the 9th to the 4th century.<sup>103</sup> Male grave goods consisted mainly of weapons and, as Vokotopoulou points out, some of the swords are similar to others discovered in Epirus, Macedonia and Illyria,<sup>104</sup> revealing the site's communication with neighboring regions. Female burials, on the other hand, had primarily ornamental objects<sup>105</sup> and may serve as an indicator of the purchasing power of the people buried there, perhaps a local elite.<sup>106</sup> Some findings also present some similarities to those of Dodona, such as some bronze oenochoi with protomes of women as handles.<sup>107</sup> We should interpret this as the result of the development of commercial routes in which both Vitsa and the Epirote sanctuary were active centers of consumption and distribution.

Datings suggest that the site declined during the complex process of reorganization and urban development that marked the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic age, and there is evidence of general destruction during the mid 4th century.<sup>108</sup> The cause is yet unknown, but, since the Molossian territory was experiencing a process of reconfiguration near the end of the 5th century and the fortifications of the main sites date to the first half of the 3rd, we might expect it to have been an agitated epoch, one in which the kingdom was continuously extending its area of control. Vitsa had walls since Archaic times. However, they were rather small and the growth of the site in the 5th century led people to build their houses outside the protected limits.<sup>109</sup> Eventually, the settlement was no longer able to adapt itself to new trends and its population began to seek safer abodes.

## 5.4 The rest of Epirus

### 5.4.1 Ambrakia

Below the current city of Arta rest the remains of ancient Ambrakia, founded as a Corinthian settlement in the second half of the 7th century<sup>110, 111</sup> Though technically

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**103** Vokotopoulou, 1985, 195 and 198; 1987, 83; Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 93 (who argues that some may date to the 10th century); Domínguez, 2015, 118–122.

**104** Vokotopoulou, 1985, 196–198. Some swords bear striking similarities to others found in Thessaly, Macedonia and Illyria (Vokotopoulou, 1987, 59–60).

**105** Domínguez, 2015, 120.

**106** Piccinini, 2012, 67–68.

**107** *Ibidem*, 164.

**108** Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 94.

**109** Vokotopoulou, 1987, 53.

**110** Papadopoulos, 2016, 437.

**111** Scymn., 444–461; Str., 10, 2, 8; Ant.Lib., *Met.* 4, 4.

in the territory of Akarnania, its location at the boundary with southeastern Epirus made it very important for this last region. It was the largest *polis* in northwestern Greece, covering at least 100 ha.<sup>112</sup> It seems that Ambrakia experienced a noteworthy growth in the Classical and, especially, the Hellenistic periods, during which some areas were transformed into luxury complexes.<sup>113</sup> Not surprisingly, the city boasted a solid perimeter of walls, with its oldest parts dating to the 7th century and most to the 4th.<sup>114</sup>

The most significant religious element here was the temple of Apollo Soter,<sup>115</sup> the tutelary deity of the place.<sup>116</sup> Livy also mentions an Asklepeion in the highest section of the city,<sup>117</sup> but archaeologists have not yet found any evidence of it. There are, on the other hand, objects related to the cult of Apollo Agyieus and its symbol, the *baetyl*,<sup>118</sup> which we have already seen in Ammotopos. Two coin series minted in Ambrakia during the Roman period depicted it.<sup>119</sup> Other divinities with a presence in Ambrakia include Herakles,<sup>120</sup> Artemis,<sup>121</sup> Dionysos<sup>122</sup>, Zeus<sup>123</sup> and Aphrodite.<sup>124</sup> There might be a connection here with Dodona, where Zeus Naios and Dione might have been worshiped along with their daughter,<sup>125</sup> Aphrodite. Pyrrhus moved the royal court to Ambrakia and may have brought the cult of Aphrodite Aeneas from Italy, possibly bringing this practice to the Epirote sanctuary. Nevertheless, the votive offerings do not record any special change at the beginning of the 3rd century, which means that if there truly was a cult of Aphrodite, it probably dates to earlier times. With regard to Ambrakia, According to Hammond, Aeneas' visit to Ambrakia and subsequent consultation of the oracle of Dodona may be proof that the cult of Aphrodite predated the kingship of Pyrrhus.<sup>126</sup> Although the argument is not strong by itself, the importance of this cult in Corinth<sup>127</sup> supports the assumption of its importance in the Corinthian colonies.

Three 4th-century terracotta figurines of women with doves on their laps were also found in Ambrakia, which Tzouvara-Souli links to Aphrodite.<sup>128</sup> In Dodona

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112 Andréou, 1999, 343–345.

113 Andréou, 1993, 91–95; Gehrke and Wirbelauer, 2004, 356.

114 Andréou, 1993, 93; Ceka, 2011, 640–650.

115 Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 66; Cabanes and Andréou, 1985.

116 Ant.Lib., *Met.* 4, 3–4.

117 Livy, 38, 5.

118 Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 65–66. For more on the cult at *Ammotopos*, see 5.3.8.

119 Franke, 1961, 324.

120 Ant.Lib., *Met.* 4, 6–7.

121 Ant.Lib., *Met.* 4, 5.

122 Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 74–76, because of 3rd century coins that depict the god.

123 Tzouvara-Souli, 2004, 527, once again on numismatics grounds.

124 Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 73.

125 Dione even appears in a series of Ambrakan coins of the Roman period (Franke, 1961, 324).

126 Dion.Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1, 50, 4; cf. Hammond, 1967, 413.

127 Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, 416.

128 Tzouvara-Souli, 1979, 47.

this kind of votive was probably dedicated to Dione, though Aphrodite still remains a potential candidate. Pottery provides a good gauge of Ambrakia's commercial contacts from as early as the Archaic period, when the Corinthian style predominated.<sup>129</sup> The city began to mint its own coins in the 5th century,<sup>130</sup> the most common motif being Zeus Keraunios,<sup>131</sup> followed by the gryphon, the obelisk, and Apollo Aktios.<sup>132</sup> The proximity and constant traffic between Ambrakia and Dodona is clearly attested in the oracular epigraphy. In fact, Ambrakia is cited 13 times, more than any other city.<sup>133</sup> All of these appear to have been private consultations, although some are so fragmented that this is difficult to confirm. Some, however, preserve enough information to give us a glimpse of the kinds of questions submitted to the oracle, as, for instance, one concerning an agonistic competition in the city.<sup>134</sup>

Philip II was aware of the strategic importance of Ambrakia and attacked it ca. 338.<sup>135</sup> We do not know what degree of autonomy the city enjoyed between this time and the kingship of Pyrrhus, but there is no doubt that its power and influence endured. After becoming the capital of Molossia, the city likely regained its independence following the death of Pyrrhus.<sup>136</sup> It would later move closer to the Aetolian *Koinon*<sup>137</sup>, although there were several attempts by Philip V of Macedon to control it.<sup>138</sup> In 189, it was conquered by Rome and obtained the status of a free city.<sup>139</sup> With this changing context in mind, one may ask about the stability of the contact between Ambrakia and Dodona. Is it possible, for instance, that, during the period in which the city was under the sphere of influence of the Aetolian *Koinon*, Ambrakian traffic to the sanctuary decreased? The shrine itself suffered an attack by the Aetolians in 219, after which Philip V restored it. A priori, material evidence does not reveal any changes that we can link to this context.

#### 5.4.2 Ambrakos and Boucheta

The location of these sites is currently uncertain. Scholars have tended to identify the archaeological sites of Phidokastro with Ambrakos and Kastro Rogoi with Boucheta, as we can see in MAP 1. Nevertheless, Karatzeni has proposed a new hypothesis that

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<sup>129</sup> Pliakou, 1999.

<sup>130</sup> Hammond, 1967, 542.

<sup>131</sup> Talvio, 2011, 312.

<sup>132</sup> Oikonomidou-Karamesini, 1990, 271.

<sup>133</sup> *LOD* 65 and 106; *DVC* 618A; 814A; 891B; 1066B; 1473A; 2089A; 2265B; 2295A; 3549A; 3828A, and 3979B.

<sup>134</sup> *DVC* and 2089A, respectively.

<sup>135</sup> Dem., 7, 32.

<sup>136</sup> Meyer, 2013, 129.

<sup>137</sup> Lefèvre, 1995, 196, No. 68–71; Grainger, 2000, 113.

<sup>138</sup> Grainger, 1999, 228.

<sup>139</sup> Livy, 38, 44, 3–4.

situates Ambrakos in Kastro Rogoi and Boucheta in Michalitsi.<sup>140</sup> Since these settlements were surely very important in the pilgrimage route to Dodona, I will devote the following paragraphs to this question.

There was a small center, a *πολίχνιον*,<sup>141</sup> near Ambrakia known as Ambrakos, which functioned as an outpost. Polybius describes it in the context of the war between Philip V and the Aetolian *Koinon* (220–219) as a fortification built over marshes with unique and narrow access that controlled the surrounding territory and the path to Ambrakia. Convinced by the Epirotes of its importance, Philip decided to besiege it.<sup>142</sup> The place was a defensive enclave significant enough to delay the advance of Philip to Aetolia.<sup>143</sup> It took him forty days to conquer the site, after which he gave it to the Epirotes and resumed his campaign.<sup>144</sup> Pseudo-Scylax, on the other hand, refers to a harbor of Ambrakia that connected the city with the sea, a *λιμὴν κλειστός*.<sup>145</sup> Ambrakia supposedly had two more outposts, Koroneia and Herakleion. Whereas the first one remains unidentified, the second is likely to be the site of Chanopoulos, located a bit north of the *polis*.<sup>146</sup> In the case of Boucheta, it is commonly thought to be one of the colonies founded by the Eleans. I have rejected this theory in a previous section. The center was situated in the region of Cassope and was also considered a *πολίχνιον*.<sup>147</sup> Based on Strabo's account we know it was near the coast.<sup>148</sup> In 338 Philip II conquered it and gave it to his relative, Alexander I of Molossia.<sup>149</sup>

The archaeological site of Phidokastro is just a few kilometers from the current village of Neochori. Hammond relates that he discovered a settlement there covered by so much water that he could only see the walls. By that time, Phidokastro was 8 km from the mouth of the Arachtos river, but in the description of Leake and the *Austrian Staff Map*, both of them from the 19th century, the distance was 3 km.<sup>150</sup> Kastro Rogoi, for its part, is located on a promontory near present-day Nea Kerassounta. Hammond noticed its ideal location for pilgrims commencing their journey to Dodona.<sup>151</sup> The fortification, with a perimeter of 1,300 m, shows different phases of construction, the oldest one from the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the 5th.<sup>152</sup>

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**140** Karatzeni, 2011.

**141** Steph.Byz., s.v.

**142** Polyb., 4, 61, 7.

**143** Polyb., 4, 61, 3–6.

**144** Polyb., 4, 63, 1–3.

**145** Scyl., *Per.* 33: “...ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ θαλάττης τεῖχος καὶ λιμὴν κλειστός”. Also Dion. Calliphon., 29–30.

**146** Karatzeni, 2011, 145–146.

**147** Theopomp., *FGrHis* 115 F382.

**148** Str., 7, 7, 5: “...μικρὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς θαλάττης.

**149** Dem., 7, 32.

**150** Hammond, 1967, 137–138.

**151** Hammond, 1997c, 48.

**152** Ceka, 2011, 651–653.



These are the basic data available until recently. In 2003, the *Nikopolis Project*, developed during the 1990s, published its research<sup>153</sup> and presented a different view of the history of the northwestern part of the Ambrakian Gulf, especially as regards the evolution of its landscape. The authors of the study explain that throughout the millennia the features of this territory have changed dramatically, partly due to the activity of the Arachtos and Louros rivers. In some periods, the sea level approached the mountainous area, covering the plain entirely with the exception of a few hills. At other times it was a marshland. Moreover, there have been modifications to the course of the Louros river. In antiquity it discharged directly to the south, but in medieval times it turned west – probably because of anthropogenic causes – surrounding the promontory of Kastro Rogoi on its western side. The site was, therefore, an island in the Hellenistic period, separated from the mainland by a narrow corridor.<sup>154</sup>

In 2011, Karatzeni demonstrated the weakness of the theory regarding Ambrakos and Boucheta. Her new hypothesis is based mainly on four arguments. First, in the 4th century Molossia, as Pseudo-Scylax states, already controlled a coastal area of 40 stadia – 8 km – between Cassope and Ambrakia.<sup>155</sup> Second, the site of Phidokastro fits well with the idea of “the harbor of Ambrakia”, but not with the description of Ambrakos, which was remarkably fortified. Third, Polybius describes Ambrakos as being situated in a marshland, with only one connection to the mainland.<sup>156</sup> Fourth, the area of Phidokastro is a fluvial plain whose constant sedimentation complicated the possibility of establishing a permanent settlement. Keeping in this mind, Karatzeni’s theory rejects Phidokastro as Ambrakos, proposing Kastro Rogoi as the more reasonable alternative. At that time, this hill was an island next to the mainland that could have been connected through an artificial pass. Its geographical location, near the mouth of the Louros and, therefore at the entrance of the valley, was very favorable. Moreover, any ships that accessed the gulf towards Ambrakia always crossed Ambrakos first. This better explains why attacking Ambrakos did not excessively delay Philip V’s campaign from inland Epirus to Aetolia.

This new hypothesis requires that we locate another site for Boucheta other than Kastro Rogoi. According to Karatzeni, the best candidate is Michalitsi near Cassope.<sup>157</sup> The characteristics of the place make the proposal feasible, although further excavation is needed to confirm it.<sup>158</sup>

If we return to the route that Hammond suggested pilgrims to Dodona took, the new data require a slight modification of the itinerary. When Ambrakos was thought to be Phidokastro, the logical choice would have been to pass through Ambrakia,

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<sup>153</sup> Wiseman and Zachos, 2003.

<sup>154</sup> Rapp and Jing, 2003, *passim*, esp. 194–195.

<sup>155</sup> Scyl., *Per.* 30.

<sup>156</sup> Polyb., 4, 61, 7.

<sup>157</sup> Karatzeni, 2011, 151–152.

<sup>158</sup> Domínguez, 2015, 115–117.

which was directly north of the site. However, Kastro Rogoi is a few kilometers west of the Corinthian colony, at the entrance of the Louros valley. Since the main path required ascending through the valley, it would have been best for those coming from the the gulf or the south to arrive at Ambrakos and start walking north, instead of towards Ambrakia, which would have been a better choice for those coming from eastern areas. In these scenarios, they probably made the first stop in the λιμὴν κλειστός, the outpost. If we follow the alternative route proposed by Hammond, travelers would have started in Ambrakos and followed a western path. Since Ambrakia was the main urban center in this area, we can imagine that it was the most common destination for the majority of ships crossing the gulf. However, I suggest that many pilgrims of Dodona disembarked at Ambrakos so that their journey would be shorter.

### 5.4.3 Ephyra and the Nekromanteion

MAP 5 shows the the western route that would have led travelers to Dodona. The orography on this side of Epirus, both on the shores and the hinterland, makes Ephyra one of the few possibilities for developing a reliable path to the sanctuary. This area included two important sites, Ephyra and the supposed Nekromanteion.

The first settlement existed already in the Bronze Age.<sup>159</sup> Today it is 4 km from the coast, but, as is the case for Kastro Rogoi, geological and geographical studies of the area have demonstrated that Ephyra was located at the mouth of the Acheron, known as Glykis Limen, three millennia ago.<sup>160</sup> The archaeological record shows a settlement that was still active in historical times and functioned as a harbor,<sup>161</sup> as some ancient authors say.<sup>162</sup> It is possible that the importance of Ephyra fluctuated over the centuries. In the Bronze Age it almost certainly functioned as the main harbor of the Epirote region, connecting the commercial networks between the Mycenaean world and the west.<sup>163</sup> The site declined in later times but remained active. Its role as a harbor meant that it became one of the possibilities for pilgrims going to Dodona. However, this was likely only a secondary route to the sanctuary, which would pass through Pandosia, a bigger settlement.<sup>164</sup>

Before moving on to Pandosia, I would like to stop briefly and examine another archaeological site near Ephyra, commonly considered the Oracle of Death, the Nekromanteion. The possibility of linking two shrines in the same route, for those who arrived at Ephyra in order to go to Dodona, makes analyzing this site absolutely es-

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<sup>159</sup> Wardle, 1993, 120–124.

<sup>160</sup> Piper and Panagos, 1981; Besonen, Rapp and Jing, 2003.

<sup>161</sup> Mauro, 2019, 40.

<sup>162</sup> Pind., *Nem.* 7, 34–40; Thuc., 1, 46, 4; Str., 7, 7, 5 (who calls the center Cichyrus).

<sup>163</sup> Tartaron, 2004, 202.

<sup>164</sup> Identified here with the site of Kastri Mesopotamou, supporting the theory of Dakaris, among others (1971a, 164–165), instead of Trikastron, proposed by Hammond (1967, 481).

sential. The existence of this type of sanctuary is known to us via literary sources.<sup>165</sup> A short passage in the *Odyssey* gives a remarkable description of a Nekromanteion, located near the sea, and explains the procedure that Odysseus had to follow to speak with Tiresias.<sup>166</sup> This was one of the four sites – the others being Heraklea Pontica, Tainaron, and the Lake Avernus – where mortals could communicate with the Underworld.<sup>167</sup>

Between 1958 and 1964, Dakaris conducted excavations of some remains found below a church on a rocky hill near where the Pyriphlegethon and Cocytos rivers converge.<sup>168</sup> In addition to some Bronze Age burials, the scholar focused on the vestiges of a big building with a square layout. The ensemble contained several rooms, corridors and an underground chamber. The structure dates to the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the 3rd. More rooms were added later during the Hellenistic period.<sup>169</sup> Dakaris interpreted the site as the famous Nekromanteion and tried to reconstruct the process that visitors followed when consulting the oracle based on the materials discovered there.<sup>170</sup> Among those objects were a few terracotta statuettes of women bearing fruits and wheat dated to the 5th century.<sup>171</sup> Based on the iconography they were linked to the cult of Persephone.<sup>172</sup> The building was abandoned after its destruction in 167. Its western part was partially reinhabited in the 1st century BCE.<sup>173</sup> Linked to the cult of Persephone discussed above are a series of Thesprotian coins from the 4th century depicting Persephone and Cerberus, two motifs clearly linked to the Oracle of Death.<sup>174</sup> In a village to the southwest of the site, archaeologists discovered female clay figurines, some of them heads, which they again linked to Persephone.<sup>175</sup> There were also terracotta statuettes of women dated from the second half of the 7th century to the 5th, as well as four female heads from Hellenistic times.<sup>176</sup> According to Dakaris, these were the remains of an archaic sanctuary that ceased to operate once the large one was instated.<sup>177</sup>

This has been the prevailing hypothesis for decades and most scholars have supported it.<sup>178</sup> Nevertheless, Wiseman provided a new insight that exposed the weakness of Dakaris' arguments, which took some liberties in the interpretation of the ma-

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<sup>165</sup> Hdt., 5, 92, 2 among others.

<sup>166</sup> Hom., *Od.* 10, 508–525.

<sup>167</sup> Ogden, 2001, 17; Friese, 2010, 79.

<sup>168</sup> Dakaris, 1972, 6–10.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibidem*, 10–12.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibidem*, 12–17.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibidem*, 17.

<sup>172</sup> Hammond, 1967, 489.

<sup>173</sup> Dakaris, 1972, 19.

<sup>174</sup> Franke, 1961, 49–50 and Taf. 8, V, 1–3.

<sup>175</sup> Tzouvara-Souli, 1979, 102–110.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibidem*, 103.

<sup>177</sup> Dakaris, 1972, 19.

<sup>178</sup> For example, Hammond, 1967; Richer, 1979, 21; Tartaron, 2004.

terials found in the Hellenistic building. Most of the findings were in some way linked to agriculture and a few of them were also martial in nature. Wiseman concluded that the site was a well-defended farm.<sup>179</sup> The debate remains open and the new theory has some supporters, such as Pliakou, who also highlights that none of the statuettes, with one sole exception, have the specific attributes of Persephone.<sup>180</sup> In my opinion, Wiseman's arguments are strong enough to reject Dakaris' interpretation of the Hellenistic building as the Nekromanteion. The female figurines could in fact be evidence of cult activity in this area, but until now no shrine has appeared. If one were to surface, there could be some kind of connection with the offerings at the Molossian sanctuaries. However, this may also be explained by the common trend of dedicating female figurines. A specific link between these votives and those found in Dodona seems to be unlikely.

#### 5.4.4 Phoenike

Already mentioned as the possible capital of the Epirote *Koinon*, Phoenike was the main urban center in Chaonia and the political and administrative seat of the *ethnos*.<sup>181</sup> It is possible that the mention of “the *polis* of the Chaonians” (ἡ πόλις ἁ τῶν Χαόνων) in an oracular consultation refers to this Phoenike.<sup>182</sup> The celebration of meetings among the leaders of this federal state, Rome and Macedonia, are clear evidence of the significance of the place.<sup>183</sup> The remains of the *polis* are located near the Albanian city of Sarandë and date from the 4th century BCE to the 16th CE, with sporadic materials from the 6th and 5th centuries BCE.<sup>184</sup> Phoenike reached its peak during the Hellenistic period, with the planning of the inhabited area achieved in the 3rd and 2nd centuries.<sup>185</sup> The first great phase of urban expansion seems to have taken place in the mid-3rd century.<sup>186</sup>

It does not seem that Phoenike was the focal point of any of the main routes to Dodona, although its geographical position connected it with the Drinos valley via the northern route. Architecturally, however, Phoenike bears quite a few resemblances with the Epirote sanctuary. As previously explained, some scholars see similarities between the two buildings considered to be treasuries in Phoenike and Butrint,<sup>187</sup> and

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<sup>179</sup> Wiseman, 1998.

<sup>180</sup> Pliakou, 2010, 415 and n. 92.

<sup>181</sup> Gjongecaj, 2004, 169.

<sup>182</sup> *LOD* 11; cf. Lasagni, 2018 (with a discussion of the term “*polis*” in this specific case, maybe the “*koinon*”).

<sup>183</sup> Polyb., 16, 27, 4; Livy, 29, 12, 10–16

<sup>184</sup> De Maria and Gjongecaj, 2014, 199–200. The urban growth covers the 4th century BCE to the 2nd CE, after which there is no more development, only continuation of activity (de Maria, 2015, 88).

<sup>185</sup> Condi, 2004, 373.

<sup>186</sup> De Maria and Gorica, 2018, 544.

<sup>187</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 160; Mancini, 2013, 88–90.

the structures in Dodona, especially Z and Θ. This would not be unexpected, since all of them were interconnected in the same network of paths and communications.

The importance of Phoenike lies not just in the site, but in the settlements in its surroundings. As Bogdani and Giorgi attest, even though the fortification of some places demonstrates the need for defense, the general picture is one of economic production and habitation. There was a dynamic network of paths and communications that connected all of them and led to the emergence of a road system. Already by the 3rd century Phoenike was at the core of this ensemble controlling the development and activity of the other settlements in the area.<sup>188</sup> It is thus not surprising that Polybius describes it as the most powerful and fortified Epirote center, even if he does so to remark that the Illyrians looted it in 230.<sup>189</sup>

There is still a lot of work to be done on Phoenike, where excavations have uncovered several buildings. The theater is, together with the one of Dodona, the biggest in Epirus and dated to the 3rd century;<sup>190</sup> the Hellenistic agora has a temple and a basilica from the Christian period.<sup>191</sup> There are domestic structures<sup>192</sup> and a necropolis in the southern area, with the earliest graves dating to the second half of the 4th century.<sup>193</sup> One of the outstanding constructions is the temple or treasury, depending on the author, which bears similarities with another structure in the sanctuary of Asklepios in Butrint and with Building Λ in Dodona,<sup>194</sup> interpreted here as the treasury of the Chaonian *ethnos* for precisely this reason.

In the religious sphere, the depiction of Artemis on some local coins and the discovery of some statues in the likeness of the goddess are perhaps evidence for a cult of Artemis. This would fit with the presence of commercial routes connecting the site with several Corinthian colonies. Archaeologists have also identified an extra-urban sanctuary, Döber, 20 km south of Phoenike. Although the site is technically closer to Butrint, a mountain stands between both sites. A plain lies between the shrine and Phoenike making it likely that the sanctuary was under latter's sphere influence. Possibly founded in the 4th century, there is evidence of a cult to Demeter and Artemis.<sup>195</sup> Another temple bearing the the symbol of a trident also suggest the presence of a cult to Poseidon.<sup>196</sup>

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**188** Bogdani and Giorgi, 2011, 394–399.

**189** Polyb., 2, 5, 8.

**190** De Maria and Gorica, 2018, 541.

**191** Gamberini, 2015, 91–99 (pottery and numismatics in this space); Mancini, 2015b, 18–21 (terraccottae, especially four female heads).

**192** As for example the House of Paintings, a unique case in Epirus (Gorica, 2015, 43–46).

**193** De Maria and Gjongecaj, 2014, 204–213; De Maria and Gorica, 2018, 542–551.

**194** Piccinini, 2016, 159–160.

**195** De Maria and Mercuri, 2007, 148–165.

**196** *Ibidem*, 168.

### 5.4.5 Apollonia

Although far away from Dodona, Apollonia was the starting point by land of the northern route leading to the sanctuary. It was technically in Illyrian territory, although the boundaries were not always clear, as we can glean from Strabo's account which describes it as an Epirote city.<sup>197</sup> The site stood on a hill, near the current village of Pojan. In ancient times ships had to go up the Aoos river to reach the site.<sup>198</sup> Founded by Corinthians and Kerkyraeans between 600 and 588,<sup>199</sup> Apollonia quickly became one of the main hubs on the shores of the Adriatic. Its major development took place in the Hellenistic period, with a noteworthy growth even outside the fortification,<sup>200</sup> with bricks dated to the 4th century onwards.<sup>201</sup> The decline of the city came during the Late Empire.<sup>202</sup>

There is a considerable amount of information concerning the site's cult activity. As the name suggests, Apollo was the tutelary deity.<sup>203</sup> The worship of Artemis under the epithets Agrota, Limnatis, or Proscopa, which linked her to both civic and rural spheres, was also important.<sup>204</sup> Although it is not necessary to enumerate all the gods present here, it is worth pointing out the worship of Zeus and Dione.<sup>205</sup> Like any other urban center, Apollonia experienced many changes throughout the centuries, its cults not excepted. 1 km from the city stood a small shrine on a hill called Shtyllas. It is uncertain to which deity the Classical temple was consecrated.<sup>206</sup>

At least one oracular consultation from Dodona mentions Apollonia and it treats the topic of sailing.<sup>207</sup> Our literary sources have also passed down to us several episodes with different degrees of veracity. Diodorus narrates how the Spartan general Lysander tried to bribe a few oracles, among them the oracle of Dodona. The person acting on his behalf was Pherekrates, an Apollonian that had close contacts with the priestesses of the sanctuary.<sup>208</sup> Herodotus recounts a passage in which Evenios, born in Apollonia, failed in his duty of taking care of flocks consecrated to the god Apollo. After his flocks were attacked by wolves, the inhabitants of the city condemned him to lose his sight. Suddenly the animals became infertile and the soil stopped bearing fruit. Both Dodona and Delphi revealed to them that this plague was brought about

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**197** Str., 2, 40.

**198** Dakaris, Christidis and Vokotopoulou, 1993, 56.

**199** Scymn., 444–461; Str., 7, 5, 8; Steph.Byz., Ἀπολλωνία. Cf. Hammond, 1967, 426.

**200** Koço, 2004, 317–319.

**201** Lamboley and Skenderaj, 2018, 423.

**202** Skenderaj, 2004, 315–316.

**203** Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 65.

**204** Quantin, 2004, 595–608.

**205** Tzouvara-Souli, 1993, 78.

**206** Quantin, 1999b, 229–236.

**207** *DVC* 366 A. Perhaps on some of the plaques where we read the name of the god Apollo we should instead read Apollonia, as for instance *DVC* 3671 A (Ἀπολ[---]).

**208** Diod.Sic., 14, 13, 4.

by divine design because Evenios was innocent. The calamities abated when the youth was compensated for his loss.<sup>209</sup> Despite the mythical nature of this story, the reference shows the significance of shepherding in Epirus. Likewise, these two episodes are evidence the connections between Apollonia and Dodona, not just through oracular consultations, but also through the traffic of people and ideas between both places.

## 5.5 Connections between Dodona and other Epirote centers

The goal of this section has been to examine the possible links between Dodona and other Epirote settlements. In some cases, the connection is clear and we can discern with nuance how they influenced each other and the role that they played in the routes that led to the sanctuary. For others the evidence is less firm. We must also take into account that there were many changes at all levels throughout the centuries that entailed a constant shift in the relationships between the Epirote localities. An ideal approach would analyze all sites in Epirus. However, many of them remain unexcavated and it is not always possible to find evidence of these specific contacts.

The types of settlements in Epirus were a key factor in its historical development. The region had both *ethne* and *poleis*. The first true city-states were colonies founded along the coast. It is not until almost the 4th century that we can talk about *poleis* in the hinterland and even those were part of an *ethnos*-based territorial system, which encompassed several communities in the same area. The fact that epigraphy attests at least three ethnic groups implies that frontiers were a complex issue. The large number of fortifications throughout Epirus is clear proof of the unstable situation. Activities like pilgrimage and shepherding were certainly useful for connecting areas that were sometimes at odds with one another. The sanctuary would in this sense function as a boundary transgressive element, enhancing the common identity of all Molossians and/or Epirotes, independent of the region where they lived.

The identification of the Molossian settlements is far from being set in stone. The only one we can be reasonably certain about is Ammotopos/Horraeum. It is quite surprising that these centers barely appear in the oracular consultations of Dodona. Among them only Horraeum,<sup>210</sup> Eurymenae – the fifth known center not examined here –<sup>211</sup> and perhaps Phylace are attested.<sup>212</sup> The absence of Passaron is particularly shocking, but we must consider that there are very few cases in which the lead tablets preserve the city of origin or the gentilic of the consultant.

Our knowledge of the Molossian territory has many gaps. It is clear that the most important sites were on acropoleis, usually fortified. Some scholars support the idea

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<sup>209</sup> Hdt., 9, 93.

<sup>210</sup> *SGDI* 1366, among others.

<sup>211</sup> *SEG* XV, 384.

<sup>212</sup> C2 (Φύλατος, the demonym?).

that they were merely administrative centers, and that the general population would have lived in the low-lying areas.<sup>213</sup> Archaeological work in Epirus is constantly yielding new data that helps us add more pieces to this very convoluted puzzle. For example, recently a new settlement has been discovered, Episkopiko, situated on a hill in the southwestern corner of the Ioannina plain. The first findings have provided a sketch of a remarkable site that flourished during the Hellenistic period.<sup>214</sup>

The broad outline of paths connected all the sites. Sometimes this could lead to coincidences in cult, such as the presence of Zeus and Dione far from Dodona, or the consultation of Apollo in the shrine. Whether these coincidences were due to the fluid communications among these centers or just a mere manifestation of the variety of cults that existed in ancient Greece, we cannot know. However, it is necessary to consider all possibilities and more specifically the connections between neighbor centers. Many material remains evince the same links, the result of continuous exchange of goods, ideas and people. It is essential to take into account the surroundings of a site and the traffic involved in its paths and communications. The above study has focused on Epirus, but the reality was much broader.

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**213** Pliakou, 2011b, 101–104.

**214** Zachos, 2010, 345–346.



## 6. Pilgrimage to Dodona

### 6.1 Introduction – An archaeology of pilgrimage

FIG. 8 shows a reconstruction of the sanctuary at Dodona during early Hellenistic times. The basilica and other structures were later additions. The model represents a mere snapshot in the life of the sanctuary which developed over centuries. It is crucial to be always aware that the landscape of Dodona has different phases and the scholar's task is to try to discern the evolutionary stages of the shrine by means of all the available sources. Once this is accomplished we may be better equipped to reconstruct the process of pilgrimage to Dodona and the dynamism of the phenomenon.

Pilgrimage is a priori an easily definable concept: It consists in traveling or journeying to a sacred place. Establishing a temporal frame for the activity and untangling all of its religious and experiential connotations is the subject of debate.<sup>1</sup> My study takes for granted the existence of “sacred journeys” to shrines in Greece, and other cultures in Antiquity.<sup>2</sup> Ancient Greek did not have a term completely analogous to our concept of “pilgrim”. The word *theoros* (θεωρός) is perhaps the closest and can, depending on the context, mean “spectator”, “ambassador”, “emissary”, or “envoy to the public games / to consult the oracles”. A *theoros* could thus serve as a representative of a *polis* or community in a sacred space. By extension the term *theoria* can denote a festival, being a spectator at a festival, an embassy to a shrine, and the journey to (and eventual return from) a sanctuary.<sup>3</sup> Another word closely linked to pilgrimage is *hiketes*, which literally means “the one who comes”. Thus, whereas the *theoros* was in charge of observing – note its derivation from the verb ὀράω – the *hiketes* would have had a more active role.<sup>4</sup> Sources provide multiple cases of *theoroi* and their respective receptors, as in the case of a man called Pantaleon, a *theorodokos* of Dodona in the late 3rd century.<sup>5</sup> We also know that private pilgrims sometimes accompanied the *theoroi* in their trips.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, terminology alone does not yield a complete account of pilgrimage in the Greek world. Fortunately, the last decades have witnessed a surge in studies focused on the materiality of pilgrimage, a significant improvement from previous analyses, which tended to examine the phenomenon in abstract terms.<sup>7</sup> Archaeology too has come to embrace religion as one of its domains by understanding it as a so-

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1 For pilgrimage in the Greek world see Scullion (2006).

2 For a more general treatment of pilgrimage in Antiquity, the work of Elsner and Rutherford (2006) is a good starting point.

3 Rutherford, 2013, 4–7.

4 Naiden, 2006, 73–74.

5 Plassart, 1921, col. IV.

6 Dillon, 1997, 11.

7 Droogan, 2014, *passim*.

cial phenomenon with specific boundaries. Bounded as it is, however, religion pervades all facets of daily life.<sup>8</sup> Experience, belief, and practice, the three dimensions of religion, are deeply integrated into the fabric of society.<sup>9</sup> Archaeology, the study of societies through their material culture, has previously been conceived as an approach incompatible with the subject of religion, a system of thought perceived as hidden or symbolic.<sup>10</sup> Religious objects, however, and other material elements associated to cult practices are not simply ornaments of religion, but crucial to its conception and practice. People interact with them in various ways: perceiving, touching, and remembering them.<sup>11</sup> Throughout this chapter I maintain that material culture is integral to religion in the form of the objects, architecture, built space and landscape through which the individual or collective experiences worship.<sup>12</sup> Objects and places reflect experiences, identities, and connections that developed during the life of the cult site. By “materializing” these elements in our analysis, it is possible to recover, at least in part, the ways people experienced pilgrimage religiously, socially, economically, and politically and track changes over time.<sup>13</sup>

Filling out the rest of the picture requires a venture into that which is not explicitly material. Space is full of symbols and meanings, especially for its inhabitants. As Sheldrake states, “human memories, whether individual or collective, are so often localized in landscapes even when people cannot precisely remember when they happened in time or how long they lasted”.<sup>14</sup> Pilgrimage is a special phenomenon which required moving from one place to another across time. Following routes, reaching the destination, accomplishing the mission, and returning home demanded a particular relationship between the pilgrims and the environments they encountered. They experienced the process, perceiving aspects that others not heading to the sacred place did not. There was a different semantic burden, a different cognitive process.<sup>15</sup>

This chapter delves into the archaeology of pilgrimage by looking at materiality of this activity at Dodona and supplementing those findings with a phenomenological approach. The site has a lot of potential for this approach due to its various peculiarities, such as the oracular plaques. A more complete study might treat the routes to the sacred place, or, as some scholars call them, movement lines.<sup>16</sup> These consist of not just trail itself, but also the cult spots where pilgrims performed sacrifices and rituals<sup>17</sup> aimed to propitiate deities, such as Hermes, Hekate and Hera-

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<sup>8</sup> Insoll, 2001, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis-Williams, 2008, 39.

<sup>10</sup> Droogan, 2014, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Yasin, 2012, 261–262.

<sup>12</sup> Kristensen, 2012, 70.

<sup>13</sup> Yasin, 2012, 266.

<sup>14</sup> Sheldrake, 2001, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Culley, 2008, 68.

<sup>16</sup> Santos, Parceró and Criado, 1997, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Horster, 2010, 437.

kles. These places usually functioned as territorial boundaries, further contributing to the definition of frontiers.<sup>18</sup>

Paths also connected the centers located along the pilgrimage route. Inns provided overnight lodgings and markets sold pilgrims victuals for their travels. This had obvious social and economic implications.<sup>19</sup> The more people went to a sanctuary, the more settlements situated along the way developed. Of course, pilgrimage was just one of the many reasons for travel, and it is difficult, if not impossible sometimes, to discern specific evidence of pilgrimage at these sites. In the same vein, the presence of similar objects in both the sanctuary and one or more of these centers can be the result of pilgrimage, commerce or even the movement of troops in a martial context.

Before proceeding with our analysis of pilgrimage to Dodona, there are still a few questions to resolve. What was the frequency of pilgrimage to the Epirote sanctuary? Did the shrine receive visitors during the entire year or seasonally? It seems that visitors went to Dodona for various reasons, such as consulting the oracle or participating in the Naia, the latter of which were held at specific a time of the year. It is not clear whether oracular activity was performed only on certain dates or year-round. Delphi was supposed to have given consultations only one day out of the year,<sup>20</sup> which later turned into nine or twelve days.<sup>21</sup> We may surmise, however, based on the literary portrayal of Delphic consultations that do not adhere to this strict rule, that the Pythia was available outside of the “official” schedule.<sup>22</sup> Didyma and Korope might have also had special days for oracular consultation.<sup>23</sup> With regard to Dodona, we have no information of this kind. We may hypothesize that, if the emergence of the shrine had strong ties to shepherding culture, Dodona may have originally functioned according to the calendar inherent in the pasturing of flocks. The material remains of later centuries, especially the oracular epigraphy, points to noteworthy traffic in the site, suggesting that pilgrims could have consulted Zeus Naios and Dione during most of the year. Certain kinds of questions point to the idea of consulting the oracle when the situation took place and not in a specific time of the year.

The time involved in pilgrimage is equally difficult to ascertain. Elsner and Rutherford, in their discussion of local pilgrimage in Classical Greece, suggest that long journeys to sanctuaries in the same region were of 20–30 miles (32–48 km), i.e. one or two days.<sup>24</sup> The only information we have concerning travel to Dodona comes from Dionysus of Halicarnassus, who relates that Aeneas and his men traveled

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<sup>18</sup> Nixon, 2006, 100. I will not treat this topic in depth due to the scarcity of information and doubts concerning the paths that led to Dodona.

<sup>19</sup> Stopford, 1994, 60.

<sup>20</sup> Salt and Boutsikas, 2005, 565–566; Boutsikas, 2015, 80.

<sup>21</sup> Beerden, 2013, 179.

<sup>22</sup> Segura Munguía, 1992, 209.

<sup>23</sup> Beerden, 2013, 179.

<sup>24</sup> Elsner and Rutherford, 2006, 18.

from Ambrakia to the sanctuary in two days.<sup>25</sup> Although this is a mythical episode, the calculation seems about right for the 80 km that separate the sites. Assuming pilgrims took longer to cover the same distance as soldiers we can hypothesize that they may have taken at least three days to cover the distance – and three more days to come back – not counting the consultation itself. For those arriving to the *polis* from farther regions, such as Apollonia, the trip would have naturally been longer. In short, pilgrimage could take weeks, perhaps even months, for people coming from more distant lands.

A more precise treatment of these movement patterns demands a nuanced study of the development of transportation, the types of paths present, orography and number of daylight hours, among other things. These factors are incredibly difficult to measure. Thus, the current trend employs GIS technology to define the optimal movement lines and uses algorithms to calculate the traffic speed according to several criteria. The results are, for obvious reasons, debated by scholars and no single model is universally supported.<sup>26</sup> For our purposes, it is not necessary to know the exact time required to accomplish the pilgrimage. The very diversity of Dodona's visitors makes this task impossible. We can be sure, however, that for those living in Molossia, or Epirus as a whole, heading to the sanctuary was not as complex or involved an endeavor as for those coming from outside. One may surmise that not everybody could afford such a trip. Those whose livelihood was not tied to working the land or had laborers to work it for them would have been better positioned for completing such a journey. It is, therefore, quite likely that pilgrimage to distant sanctuaries was only within reach of a small part of society. People of lesser means would have had to dispel their doubts and solve their cares by going to regional shrines.

## 6.2 Motivations

### 6.2.1 The oracle

#### 6.2.1.1 Epigraphy

The main reason to visit Dodona was probably oracular consultation. The remarkable number of preserved lead plaques offers great insight into the concerns of people in the Greek world. Questions are classified in two groups: private and public, i.e. from individuals or collectives – communities, *ethne*, *poleis*. Only 32 of the 4,216 texts published in *DVC* belong to the second group, although those that do not preserve the identity of the consultant are by default tagged as private.<sup>27</sup> According to Bonnechere, around the 10 % of the total might have been public.<sup>28</sup> Even in Delphi the tra-

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<sup>25</sup> Dion.Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1, 51, 1.

<sup>26</sup> For a good summary of this, see Gupta and Devillers, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Parker, 2016, 75.

<sup>28</sup> Bonnechere, 2013, 74.

dition of asking about international and political affairs declined gradually and, by the end of the Classical period, most consultations concerned quotidian topics.<sup>29</sup> It is also possible, however, that public consultations were not usually recorded on lead tablets,<sup>30</sup> though the presence of a few public consultations on this medium makes this less likely. We may further infer from the preponderance of private consultations that the oracle at Dodona was active most of the year. This is supported by those inquiries concerning illnesses<sup>31</sup> which suggest that people visited the sanctuary at the precise moment they had the problem.

Illness is just one of the many themes treated by the oracular consultations of Dodona. Among these were happiness,<sup>32</sup> marriage,<sup>33</sup> offspring,<sup>34</sup> residence,<sup>35</sup> slavery,<sup>36</sup> manumission,<sup>37</sup> agriculture,<sup>38</sup> stockbreeding,<sup>39</sup> fishing,<sup>40</sup> craftworks,<sup>41</sup> commerce,<sup>42</sup> theater,<sup>43</sup> management,<sup>44</sup> theft,<sup>45</sup> kidnapping,<sup>46</sup> magical filters,<sup>47</sup> death,<sup>48</sup> warlike matters,<sup>49</sup> migration,<sup>50</sup> and religious and magical practice.<sup>51</sup> There are also questions regarding sailing<sup>52</sup> and though there are no explicit inquiries about the founding of an emporion or *apoikia*, there are some cases of individuals requesting advice about whether they should join a colony, especially Pharos.<sup>53</sup> The most recent corpus of *DVC* contains inquiries about the agones. There are inscriptions related to the Olympic Games,<sup>54</sup> as well as to specific events, such as fighting,<sup>55</sup> races,<sup>56</sup> chariot

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29 Arnush, 2006, 98 and 110.

30 Parker, 2016, 75.

31 *LOD* 71 and 73, among others.

32 *LOD* 18.

33 *LOD* 25.

34 *LOD* 41.

35 *LOD* 54.

36 *LOD* 60.

37 *LOD* 62.

38 *LOD* 77.

39 *LOD* 80.

40 *LOD* 83.

41 *LOD* 84.

42 *LOD* 95A.

43 *LOD* 104.

44 *LOD* 107.

45 *LOD* 119.

46 *LOD* 123.

47 *LOD* 125.

48 *LOD* 126.

49 *LOD* 127.

50 *LOD* 130.

51 *LOD* 134.

52 C23.

53 *LOD* 6B and *DVC* 228, among others. Cf. Vecchio, 2018 and D'Ercole, 2019, who stresses the symbolic role of distance and travels to Dodona as a way to legitimate individual and collective choices.

54 *DVC* 1207B, 1878A, 2986A, 3509A, 4079A, and 4080B.

races,<sup>57</sup> and horse races.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, many of these share similar themes, such as victory/win,<sup>59</sup> courage,<sup>60</sup> or training.<sup>61</sup>

Most public consultations preserve the question submitted to the oracle. The Kerkyraeans, for example, wanted to know at least four times which god or hero they should propitiate and worship to improve the security and government of the city.<sup>62</sup> We see similar inquiries by the Tarentines,<sup>63</sup> Herakleotes,<sup>64</sup> Bylliones,<sup>65</sup> Athamans,<sup>66</sup> and Molossians.<sup>67</sup> The Thessalian *Koinon* of Mondaiaes sought to confirm whether it was to their advantage to lend silver in the temple or sanctuary of Themis.<sup>68</sup> An unknown *koinon* needed to verify whether an alliance with the Molossians was beneficial.<sup>69</sup> The *polis* of the Chaonians – presumably Phoenike – asked where to erect a temple consecrated to Athena Polias,<sup>70</sup> whereas a (probably) Corinthian colony in Epirus of unknown name thought about changing its location.<sup>71</sup> An Epirote community asked when a plague would end.<sup>72</sup> The Dodonaeans themselves asked the oracle multiple times whether the god wanted to exile an individual because of his impurity,<sup>73</sup> whether things would go well for them,<sup>74</sup> and whether there were any signs in the oak.<sup>75</sup> The oracle was expected to prove the suitability of the granting of citizenship to Kleolaos by a community.<sup>76</sup> These form a representative sample of public consultations in Dodona for which it is possible to understand the entirety or, at least, the general idea of the question. Cases in which only the name of the collective remains mention Cassope,<sup>77</sup> the Molossian sub-*ethne* of the Genuaians<sup>78</sup>

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55 DVC 225A.

56 DVC 1389A (perhaps the stadium), 3797 (“ἰδρόμου?”) and maybe also 447A.

57 DVC 491A.

58 DVC 825A.

59 DVC 1011A, 1993A, 2036B, 2089A, 2986A, and 3103A.

60 DVC 849A. This word can be applied in other contexts, as for instance a war.

61 DVC 1396A.

62 LOD 1–4. Cf. Bonnechere, 2014.

63 LOD 5.

64 LOD 6A.

65 LOD 7.

66 DVC 4016A.

67 DVC 4195A.

68 LOD 8B.

69 SGDI 1590.

70 LOD 11.

71 LOD 12.

72 LOD 13.

73 LOD 14.

74 DVC 268A.

75 DVC 2519B.

76 LOD 15.

77 DVC 363A and maybe 364B.

78 DVC 1042A.

and Phoinateans,<sup>79</sup> the Thronieans,<sup>80</sup> possibly a Boiotian *Koinon*,<sup>81</sup> perhaps the Thessalian city of Pheras,<sup>82</sup> and the Locrian site of Opus.<sup>83</sup>

Public consultations dealt with more weighty matters, seeking help in the case of plague or in choosing where to build a structure. Private inquiries usually treat more worldly matters. In the case of the former a person or delegation acted on behalf of the collective. This process was probably more complex and involved more expensive sacrifices and better offerings, among other things. Private individuals would have deposited votives commensurate to their socioeconomic status.

The dialectal variety of displayed by the tablets is surprising, especially given that most scholars think that the rate of Greek literacy was rather low and rose mainly after the 4th century.<sup>84</sup> The evidence of Dodona challenges this assumption. The questions posed to Zeus Naios and Dione do not belong exclusively to people of high class. In *LOD* 80, for example, a cattle breeder wanted to know if it was profitable for him to have more sheep. It is possible that he was not a rich landholder but had a self-sufficient business. I do not mean to suggest that all Greeks were literate, but I think that the percentage of the population able to write and read short texts was higher than expected. Moreover, it is possible that the poor intelligibility of some plaques could be due to the poor literacy of the consultant.<sup>85</sup> Curbera, on the other hand, does not discard the possibility of scribes working in the sanctuary. The nature of certain consultations support this theory, for instance that of a pilgrim with an Ionian name whose question is written in Dorian dialect, as if another had written it.<sup>86</sup> One may try to explain the dialectal variety by arguing that the personnel of the shrine came from different places in Greece, but this is unlikely.

A few abecedarian plaques have been found at Dodona.<sup>87</sup> Could they have functioned as a guide to the unlettered? Perhaps, but the presence of epichoric inscriptions from different regions means that, although the above-mentioned pieces may have served this purpose, pilgrims from all around the Greek world were able to write and read in their own alphabet when they visited the shrine to consult the oracle.

It is important to note that there were both male and female consultants. Though the number of consultations by women is rather small, at least 104 cases,<sup>88</sup> the mere fact that they exist is significant, as it shows that some women enjoyed enough au-

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<sup>79</sup> *DVC* 3822B.

<sup>80</sup> *DVC* 1184B.

<sup>81</sup> *LOD* 10.

<sup>82</sup> *DVC* 2940B.

<sup>83</sup> *DVC* 4132A.

<sup>84</sup> Harris, 1989, 324–328; Robb, 1994, 253.

<sup>85</sup> Eidinow, 2007, 129.

<sup>86</sup> Curbera, 2013, 420.

<sup>87</sup> *DVC* 1357A: [ABΓ]ΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΑΜ[Ν]ΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ.

<sup>88</sup> Katsadima, 2017, 132.



tonomy to accomplish a pilgrimage. It perhaps also offers evidence for female literacy, however restricted its distribution may have been.<sup>89</sup> There are only a few tablets that preserve the name of the individual, which suggests that the number of female consultants was probably higher. Slaves, “invisible” in many of our sources, are also represented in our corpus, where they can often be discerned by the kind of question asked, such as “Will I be free?”<sup>90</sup> or “To which god must I sacrifice to be free?”<sup>91</sup> As Parker highlights, the slave could only expect or hope for this to happen—the owner alone made the decision.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, those consultations that read ἄνθρωπος instead of a personal name are likely to come from slaves.<sup>93</sup> It is also possible that, in at least some cases, masters consulted the god on behalf of their slaves.<sup>94</sup> The temporality is another issue that requires examination. Most consultations show concern about future events – e.g. if the son of Leontinos would recover from his illness.<sup>95</sup> But sometimes they deal with past events, as we see in the case of Agis, who was not sure if he had lost his sheets and pillows or if somebody had stolen them.<sup>96</sup>

Pilgrims put their faith in the oracle. Facing uncertainty of making a decision, it was preferable to follow the indications of a third party, preferably a divinity. This is part of a psychological strategy that eases part of the tension inherent in decision-making and relieves the individual of some responsibility. Eidinow develops the concept of the “risk” of uncertainty. Our current quantification and assessment of risk was not tangible in Antiquity, which perhaps explains the trust and respect placed in oracles.<sup>97</sup> The same author has argued convincingly that the term τύχα/τύχη, a frequent and polyvalent word, was recognized as a pervasive presence in the consultations.<sup>98</sup> Dodona was a remarkable destination precisely because of its antiquity and its marginal location in the Greek world.<sup>99</sup> If the decision taken was mistaken, the parties involved could not blame the oracle, because fortune, τύχη, played an important role in the process. Likewise, if a community followed the oracle’s order and did not get the expected result they could allege that they had simply obeyed the oracle.

Of course, oracles are famously and purposefully ambiguous. In his *Trachiniae*, Sophocles’ Herakles says that he received a response from Dodona concerning a liberation from his labors. The hero understood the oracle as the end of his duties. It

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<sup>89</sup> Cole, 1981.

<sup>90</sup> *DVC* 1395 and 1411.

<sup>91</sup> *DVC* 574 and 2428.

<sup>92</sup> Parker, 2016, 83–84.

<sup>93</sup> Curbera, 2013, 420.

<sup>94</sup> Meyer, 2018, 151. In her recent study, Meyer analyzes whether there is evidence of paramonē, i.e. a situation in which slaves received their freedom but remained with their previous masters.

<sup>95</sup> *LOD* 73.

<sup>96</sup> *LOD* 121.

<sup>97</sup> Eidinow, 2007, 13–22.

<sup>98</sup> Eidinow, 2019, 97.

<sup>99</sup> Bosman, 2018, 70–72.

foretold his death.<sup>100</sup> It is maintained that oracles gave answers with double meaning to safeguard their reputation. However, some studies have refuted this theory, as both Fontenrose and, more recently, Bonnechere, have done with Delphi.<sup>101</sup> In a previous chapter I stated that some questions expected a “yes” or a “no”, leaving no room for ambiguity.<sup>102</sup> Other consultations required a more expansive response. Though it was possible to formulate answers with multiple interpretations for such inquiries, they had to be reasoned and well-grounded. The personnel of the shrine had to be well-informed with regard to the ups and downs not only of the region, but the entire Hellenic world. This is where the role of the sanctuary as a place for the exchange of knowledge enters the scene. This does not mean that the oracle was always right, but responses must have been relatively accurate for its reputation to stand. On the other hand, people did not lose faith in oracles on account of a wrong answer. Especially if they believed that their own behavior had been inappropriate or that deities acted according to their own desires and that their resolutions were subject to change.

It is unavoidable to think that the influence of the sanctuary could be harnessed by individuals for private gain. Delphi, for example, tended to support Sparta during the Peloponnesian War.<sup>103</sup> It is conceivable that Dodona may have favored the Molossian kingdom and, later, the Epirote *Koinon*. If an unknown *koinon* wanted to know whether an alliance with the Molossians was to their benefit,<sup>104</sup> the oracle may have given an affirmative response. One may suppose, however, that the *koinon* would have chosen another sanctuary if they suspected the oracle.

The oracular personnel took the origin of the consultant into account. *LOD 141Ba* enumerates sacrifices and offerings to be performed: Θεός. / Διὶ Πατρίῳι ΠΕΡΙ...ΙΟ / Τύχαι λιβάν, / Ἡρακλεῖ, Ἐρεχθεῖ, / Ἀθάναι Πατρώια(ι) (“God. To Zeus Patroios [...], to Fortune a libation, [and also] to Herakles, Erechtheus, and to Athena Patroia”). The consultant was probably Nike, who wrote in Attic dialect (141A). This explains the mention of Erechtheus, whose cult is not attested in Epirus. The oracle’s indications take into account the ritual practices of the woman’s *polis*, probably Athens.<sup>105</sup>

#### 6.2.1.2 Oracles in Literature

Our literary sources provide rich evidence for mythical, pseudo-mythical and historical oracular consultations in Dodona. A complete survey would go beyond the scope of our current investigation.<sup>106</sup> In this chapter I will treat the most important ones.

<sup>100</sup> Soph., *Trach.* 1164–1172.

<sup>101</sup> Fontenrose, 1978, 236; Bonnechere, 2013, *passim*.

<sup>102</sup> Parker, 2015, 111–113.

<sup>103</sup> Arnush, 2006, 102.

<sup>104</sup> *SGDI* 1590.

<sup>105</sup> Carbon, 2015, 77–79.

<sup>106</sup> For this, see Piccinini, 2012.

The oldest case is Odysseus' mythical visit to ask the oracle about his return to Ithaca.<sup>107</sup> This passage might be evidence of Dodona's panhellenic scope, although what it certainly does display is the poet's knowledge of regional geography, as Ithaca is situated just across the Epirote shore.<sup>108</sup> In contrast, Herodotus' account of Kroisos, the 6th century Lydian king who consulted the oracles in Delphi, Abas, Dodona, Amphiareus, and Trophonios,<sup>109</sup> clearly evinces the broad influence of the Epirote shrine.

As I mentioned above, no tablet from Dodona concerns the founding of an *apoi-kia*. The theme of colonization is attested, however, in individual inquiries about joining a colony. Our literary evidence on this topic is also rather scarce. According to Strabo, Athens was ordered to colonize Sicily by the oracle in Dodona. The Athenians, of course, interpreted Sicily to be the great island only to later realize that a hill near Athens was meant.<sup>110</sup> The account could be rooted in reality, but certainly smells of further elaboration. In another reference, Cicero asks, rhetorically, which colony Greece ever sent into Aeolia, Ionia, Asia, Sicily or Italy without consulting the oracles at Delphi, Dodona or Ammon.<sup>111</sup> Since Delphi was the oracle par excellence,<sup>112</sup> the Roman orators mention of Dodona in the same breath, suggests that Dodona was well known by his public. There are also multiple mythological passages of a similar nature, such as the one that recounts that the Pelasgians went to Italy following the orders of Dodona.<sup>113</sup> The *Scholia* to Pindar refer to the refoundation of Corinth by the Heraklid Aletus after consulting the oracle, a myth that was surely created to strengthen the bond between Corinth and Dodona.<sup>114</sup>

Oracles played an equally important role in determining the potential success of military expeditions. Before beginning his campaign in Italy ca. 326, Alexander I of Molossia visited the oracle at Dodona, which warned him about Pandosia and the Acheron river. The king assumed that the oracle referred to sites in Epirote territory and met his fate in Italy near a homonymous city and river.<sup>115</sup> Some decades later, Pyrrhus was told by the oracle that he would see the victory of the Romans and decided to manipulate the response to his benefit.<sup>116</sup> Both episodes are doubtlessly later creations, but they reflect a real custom: the Epirote *ethne* would consult Zeus Naios and Dione before significant expeditions, just as the *Koinon* would do later.

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**107** Hom., *Od.* 14, 14, 327–330; 19, 296–299.

**108** Piccinini, 2012, 115.

**109** Hdt., 1, 46, 2.

**110** Str., 8, 11, 12.

**111** Cic. *Div.* 1, 1 (3).

**112** Psalti enumerates 615 responses attributed to Delphi concerning the founding of colonies, with a high percentage of ambivalent answers (2015, 56).

**113** Dion.Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1, 19, 2–3; Macrobi., *Sat.* 1, 7, 28.

**114** Pind., *Nem.* 7, 155 (*Scholia*); cf. Piccinini, 2017, 66–72.

**115** Str., 6, 1, 5; Livy, 08, 24, 1; Iust., *Ep.* 12, 2, 3–4.

**116** D.C., 9, 40, 6.

Oracles, at any rate, were consulted by communities when they needed to make an important political decision. Athens, for example, received a response from Dodona cited in Demosthenes' speech *Against Meidias*. The *polis* was required, among other things, to offer three oxen and six sheep to Zeus Naios and to sacrifice an ox and dedicate a bronze table to Dione.<sup>117</sup> This prescription shows obvious parallels with some of the responses mentioned above, in which the oracle specified various tasks to be performed. The degree of sumptuousness would depend on the person or collective consulting the god.

### 6.2.2 The Naia

The Naia were the most important event in Dodona. We might imagine those participating in the games had very different expectations from those who went to access the oracle and would, therefore, see the shrine in different light. A pilgrim desiring to consult Zeus Naios and Dione was mainly concerned about his or her own cares; an athlete would have only one thing in mind: whether he was going to win. The competitor would also act on behalf of his whole community, a portion of which surely accompanied him. We might assume that he would spend more time in the agonistic spaces and buildings than he would in the sacred area.

It is important to note that this kind of pilgrimage took place on specific dates. The celebration also entailed the arrival of a remarkable number of participants, attendants and merchants. During this time the sanctuary became an important setting for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, as well as for propaganda.<sup>118</sup> Precisely, the agones helped to build an Epirote (and in Hellenistic times, a panhellenic) identity. In earlier times the Naia's regional nature would have served to gather the *ethne* of the area, enhancing internal bonds and, at the same time, allowing for competition among them.

### 6.2.3 Processions

All shrines represented the destination for particular processions, almost always performed collectively. It is an activity that joins members of a community together and renews their ties. Undoubtedly, the Molossian sanctuaries served this function and hosted a sacred place for each *ethnos*. Dodona, as the most important shrine in the whole Epirus, had a broad scope. Although we do not have direct evidence, it is reasonable to assume that the Molossian kingdom and the Epirote *Koinon* would periodically hold processions to the shrine, with the sympotic offerings of banquets

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<sup>117</sup> Dem., 21, 53.

<sup>118</sup> De Ligt and De Neeve, 1988, 397.

held at the end as a reminiscence of them. We have testimonies of this sort for other locations, such as the Boiotian *tripodephoria* or the Athenian *theoria*. This kind of pilgrimage would have been carried out by a relatively small group of people, since the distance was too long for a larger procession in which a significant part of the population could participate.

#### 6.2.4 Others

The sacred nature of Dodona conferred the place an aura of inviolability and security strong enough to host civil events. As I argue throughout this book, pilgrimage does not necessarily have a religious purpose as its end,<sup>119</sup> as we have seen with the Naia. All pilgrimage, however, entails the performance of rituals.

The best example of this in Dodona is the act of manumission, richly attested epigraphically. This collective act involved the slave to be freed, the master, witnesses and officials. For the manumitted, the shrine came to symbolize a new stage in their lives, the place where they gained personhood. Apart from the place where the manumission took place, which is unknown, freedmen would find importance in the physical evidence of their freedom: the bronze plaque or stone stela upon which an official registered the fact and displayed it to the public. Carapanos, who published a great part of the testimonies, explains: “Tous ces actes avaient été déposés dans le temple de Jupiter Naïos”.<sup>120</sup> It is unclear whether this was merely a theory or whether he actually found the records in the temple. Since he identified the basilica as the temple of Zeus Naïos, this would mean that he discovered the documents in the landfill – and not the sacred store – of the building. At least two pieces, C75 and C76, were found inside the *bouleuterion*.<sup>121</sup> One may surmise that this building would have been a suitable location for the exhibition of manumission documents. Building O-O1-O2 and the stoa could have functioned in the same way.

Other similar cases were the conferral of citizenship and other privileges, rituals in which the recipient also became a different person, that is, an individual with changed status in that territory. Although we do not always know where these documents would have been placed, C2, a stela, appeared just north of the basilica and Building Ø,<sup>122</sup> and SEG XV, 384 was unearthed near the *naiskos* of Zeus.<sup>123</sup> Some statue pedestals might have contained such documents too, such as inscription C16 in pedestal B16. One may surmise that bronze plaques were hung in buildings and the placing of stelai was more varied. A pilgrim going, for example, to the temple of Zeus, would have seen stelai in the vicinity recording grants of citizenship,

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<sup>119</sup> Elsner and Rutherford, 2006.

<sup>120</sup> Carapanos, 1878, 48.

<sup>121</sup> Dakaris, *Praktika*, 1969, 35.

<sup>122</sup> Evangelidis, *Hell.*, 1957, 247.

<sup>123</sup> Evangelidis, *Eph.Arch.* 1956, 1; Hammond, 1967, 525.

which would give the documents greater authority. In other words, their distribution in the shrine determined visitors' perception of the place and its constituent parts.

### 6.3 The materiality of pilgrimage to Dodona

Pilgrimage is not always easy to track in the archaeological record. The aim of this section is to compile and examine its material traces and recover their meanings. Of course, most of these meanings are difficult, if not impossible, to retrieve. For the meaning that an offering had for the pilgrim that deposited it could be tied to personal bonds and experiences unknown to us. Moreover, the findspot for objects is not always known or recorded, which means that the piece is to be analyzed outside of its original environment.

There is an obvious preference for bronze votives in the archaeological record. The material is far more common in Dodona than terracotta, gold, silver, iron, or glass, even assuming that some offerings were made in perishable materials. Each piece of bronze would have signified a considerable expense for the majority of the population, for which reason we mainly associate bronze votives with elites. Hammond even argues that they were dedicated by individuals from central and southern Greece, since, according to him, Epirotes were not wealthy enough to procure them.<sup>124</sup> This is, of course, contestable, as the ruling class would have held enough power and resources to dedicate such votives and would have seized the opportunity to use their dedications in the sanctuary to compete amongst themselves.

The first objects found in Dodona clearly connected to religious activity appear in the 8th century. Among these are the cauldrons and tripods, which I understand as both oracular elements and votives. The cults at Dodona, particularly that of Zeus Naios, might have been warlike in nature, which explains the presence of warrior figurines – perhaps a warrior god (Zeus Keraunios?) – soldiers, cavalrymen, and at least one *strategos*. These may also be interpreted, on the other hand, as offerings made by soldiers or dedicated in a martial context. Weapons and other objects related to warfare were recurrent offerings at the sanctuary and were perhaps the most frequent ones at the earliest stages. Their places of origin are uncertain. Assuming that at least some of them came from local or regional workshops their dedication might reflect the Epirote reality, a territory fragmented into multiple *ethne* and in constant internal conflicts.

From the earliest attested use of the shrine to the Classical period many animal-shaped votives were deposited at the site, which increase progressively in both quantity and variety. Some of them are probably linked to economic activities in Epirus, such as shepherding, stockbreeding and hunting. Most of these votives are made of bronze and were originally attached to vases. It is difficult to see a modest shep-

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<sup>124</sup> Hammond, 1967, 432.

herd dedicating such pieces and it is probably safer to assume that their dedication is the work of an aristocratic class. This may perhaps explain the remarkable number of bronze vessels, primarily krateres and kylikes, which point to a sympotic context. The banquet ensemble is completed by statuettes of satyrs, maenads, symposiasts, and at least one musician. There were many reasons to celebrate feasts. Public events, such as consultations and the Naia, would have involved communal consumption of food and drink, as would have concessions of citizenship and manumissions.

In the transition to the Hellenistic age the number of votives tends to decrease. The fact that this decrease coincides with the period when the sanctuary became monumentalized is quite shocking. A larger influx of people would have, if anything, resulted in an increase in offerings. That the archaeological remains point towards the very opposite suggests that there was a change in the way people interacted with the sacred space of Dodona. This period has no animal figurines linked to shepherding and fewer weapons. The same holds objects conventionally linked to the female sphere, such as jewels and mirrors.<sup>125</sup> According to the published material, the Hellenistic period is also marked by a drop in oracular consultations, with a small portion of the plaques dated to the 3rd century and only a few in the 2nd.<sup>126</sup> At first sight, we may hypothesize that there was a significant decline in pilgrimage to Dodona. This would mean that the enormous development of the shrine in the Hellenistic period was not due to the oracle itself, but rather the new functions that the place gradually acquired. I will return to this theory in the next chapter.

Another important issue that must be taken into account is the production and sale of votives. There were workshops throughout the Greek world, and it is possible, through the study of salient characteristics, to provide an approximate place of origin for many objects. This does not mean, however, that we can necessarily discern the place of origin of the dedicator, who may have acquired the object somewhere else. Evidence of workshops in sanctuaries,<sup>127</sup> suggests that pilgrims could often acquire votives upon their arrival. We may assume that the same holds for Dodona.<sup>128</sup> The sheer number of bronze objects found at the site may mean that the sanctuary had workshops and, in fact, some of the patina found on some of these objects has been interpreted as a local feature.<sup>129</sup> Piccinini counters this claim citing a frag-

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**125** I consider the female statuettes and women heads a different case. In the previous chapter I have shown the importance of this kind of offering in Molossian sanctuaries, some of them active mainly or solely in Hellenistic times. It belongs therefore not to the specific pilgrimage to Dodona from people from the entire Greek world, but to the regional population and their religious trends.

**126** As noted above, not all scholars agree with this assumption. It is possible that a remarkable amount is of a later date (Méndez Dosuna, 2016, 119). Nevertheless, although the *DOL* Project is working of a revision of the tablets, no publication analyzes this question deeply.

**127** Morgan, 1993, 23–24 (Olympia); Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, 162 (Aphrodite in Argos); Burford, 1972, 82 (Hephaestus in Athens)

**128** Parke, 1967, 100.

**129** Walter-Karydi, 1981; Kowalzig, 2007, 339.



ment of Hesiod, who describes pilgrims as bringing their own gifts (δῶρα φέρων<sup>130</sup>), which she interprets as proof that the place had no substantial local production of such goods in the earliest stages.<sup>131</sup> This theory might be too strict, since the technology required for the production of bronze objects was not so advanced. Stibbe, on the other hand, argues for the existence of a workshop in Dodona where a Lakonian master worked with Lakonian and Corinthian apprentices, based on some figurines bearing features of both styles.<sup>132</sup> Piccinini convincingly argues that the workshop would have been in Ambrakia, a harbor connected to commercial routes and the starting point for many of the pilgrims heading for Dodona.<sup>133</sup> This in itself does not, however, discard the possibility of workshops in Dodona.

Votives are by far the most evident vestige of pilgrimage to a sanctuary. Other material traces are more difficult to find, as is the case for objects employed by the sanctuary's personnel. Dodona is almost singular in its wealth of oracular plaques, which often record the identity of the consultant, but other items are more difficult to interpret, due to the similarity of non-sacred objects with ritual ones, such as vases or knives. We must bear in mind that the "religious" sphere cannot be isolated from other realms, but rather joined them in discourse.<sup>134</sup> In short, Dodona offers little information of this kind, apart from the oracular tablets. The same applies to the so-called *katagogia*, the buildings that supposedly hosted pilgrims and other visitors —no structure has been found in the sanctuary that certainly had this purpose. The two stoas may have had this function,<sup>135</sup> providing visitors with a roof to sleep under, although it was not uncommon for pilgrims to sleep under the stars, as in the case of Olympia.<sup>136</sup> It is possible that O1, the annex of Building O, a space with small rooms, was added for this purpose. In fact, Dakaris and his team thought it was built for hosting officials.<sup>137</sup> It is not unlikely that other pilgrims used it when there were no official events in the calendar. Another possibility is that the *katagogion* was located in the acropolis, as with the ellipsoidal structure from the Protogeometric period beneath the later *bouleuterion*, which probably had a religious purpose, but might have hosted visitors.<sup>138</sup>

Perhaps the most important aspect of pilgrimage is the journey itself both to and from the sacred place. Unfortunately, as explained above, the material evidence of routes is rather scarce. A small vestige of such routes may be found in the hermai, which helped to define paths and frontiers. Intriguingly, archaeologists have discov-

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130 Hes., *Fr.* 240.

131 Piccinini, 2012, 158–159.

132 Stibbe, 2006, 263.

133 Piccinini, 2017, 88–90.

134 Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 46.

135 Pedley, 2005, 75.

136 Emerson, 2007, 48.

137 Dakaris *et al.*, 1999, 153–155. Emmerling sees it a space for banquets (2012, 224–228).

138 Piccinini, 2012, 101–102.

ered three votives of this kind in Dodona,<sup>139</sup> which may be associated to the protection pilgrims sought for their return by dedicating them. Oftentimes the hermai marked the spot where travelers performed rituals during their journeys.<sup>140</sup>

## 6.4 Origin

In order to discern the paths and communications of Dodona and examine their range, it is crucial to know where pilgrims came from. Literary and epigraphic sources are useful, the latter because they often mention places or are written in dialect. Archaeological analysis also plays a critical role. For although the origin of a votive is not necessarily the same as that of the dedicator, it contributes to our reconstruction of commercial networks in the Greek world, of which the sanctuary functioned as the final recipient.

The classification I present below aims to show the origin of Dodona's pilgrims clearly and concisely. It is divided into the following geographical groups: a) Epirus and its vicinity (islands, Ambrakia); b) the rest of Hellas; c) colonies and Asia Minor; d) non-Hellenic regions. Not only does the table consider the pilgrim's place of origin, but also their business in the sanctuary. When it comes to studying the communications and importance of Dodona, paying attention to the origin of the pilgrim alone would produce an incomplete image.

| Group | Center or area                               | Kind of consultation | LOD  | DVC    |
|-------|--|----------------------|------|--------|
| a     | Dodona                                       | Public               | 14   |        |
|       |  | Private              |      | 524B   |
|       |  | Public               |      | 2519B  |
|       |  | Private              |      | 3473A  |
| a     | Παδῆαν? <sup>141</sup>                       | Private              |      | 3032   |
| a     | Onchesmos                                    | Public               | 13   |        |
| a     | Barion                                       | Private              |      | 562A   |
| a     | Elina (Thesprotia) or Anactorium (Akarnania) | Private              | 46Bb |        |
| a     | Elaea  | Private              | 113  |        |
|       |  | Private              |      | 670B?  |
|       |  | Private              |      | 2357B  |
|       |  | Private              |      | 3429B? |

<sup>139</sup> MA At. No. 1160): Carapanos, 1878, 111, No. 2 and pl. LXI, No. 4; Dieterle, 2007, 207 and 380, F605. Dieterle mentions the other two, which are supposedly in the Museum of Ioannina, but with unknown reference (Dieterle, 2007, 207 and 366, F76).

<sup>140</sup> Muir, 2011, 36.

<sup>141</sup> As the editors suggest, it could be the current village of *Pades*, ca. 80 km. north of Ioannina. Mentioned by Hammond (1967, 266).

*Continued*

| Group | Center or area                                  | Kind of consultation                             | LOD              | DVC                   |
|-------|---|--|------------------|-----------------------|
| a     | Cassope   | Public<br>Public                                 |                  | 363A<br>364B?         |
| a     | Actium  | Private<br>Private                               |                  | 1930B<br>3607B        |
| a     | Molossian <i>ethnos</i>                         | Public   |                  | 4195A                 |
| a     | <i>Ethnos</i> of the Genuaians                  | Public   |                  | 1042A                 |
| a     | <i>Ethnos</i> of the Dexaieatans                | Public?  |                  | 1070A                 |
| a     | <i>Ethnos</i> of the Phoinateans                | Public   |                  | 3822B                 |
| d     | <i>Ethnos</i> of the Athamanians <sup>142</sup> | Private<br>Public                                |                  | 1259B<br>4016A        |
| a     | <i>Ethnos</i> of the ὀρίαι?                     | Private<br>Private                               |                  | 989A<br>1696A         |
| a     | Chaonian <i>koinon</i>                          | Public   | 11               |                       |
| a     | <i>koinon</i> near the Molossians               | Public   | 9 <sup>143</sup> |                       |
| a     | Possible Epirote <i>koinon</i>                  | Public   | 10Aa             |                       |
| a     | Epirotes  | Public?  |                  | 3977A                 |
| a     | Ambrakia  | Private<br>Private<br>Private<br>Private         | 65<br>106A       | 2295A<br>3549A        |
| a     | Kerkyra   | Public<br>Public<br>Public<br>Private<br>Private | 1<br>3<br>4      | 1088A<br>1229B        |
| a     | Kerkyra and Oricum                              | Public   | 2                |                       |
| a     | Kerkyra?/Corinth?                               | Private<br>Private<br>Private                    |                  | 105B<br>193B<br>3116A |
| a     | Oricum  | Private  | 54               | 1380A                 |
| b     | Mondaia (Thessaly)                              | Public   | 8B               |                       |
| b     | Aigino (Thessaly)                               | Private  |                  | 303A                  |

<sup>142</sup> This *ethnos* was situated at the frontier of Epirus, Thessaly, and Aetolia. For this reason, depending of the source and the time period, they are said to belong to any of these territories. As they were part of Epirus (Hammond, 1967, 655–656), I catalog them here as Epirote.

<sup>143</sup> *SGDI* 1590.

*Continued*

| Group | Center or area             | Kind of consultation | LOD | DVC    |
|-------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----|--------|
| b     | Pharkadon (Thessaly)       | Private              |     | 92A    |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 233B   |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 490B   |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 1339A  |
| b     | Thetonio (Thessaly)        | Private              |     | 2537A  |
| b     | Triikka/Trikala (Thessaly) | Private?             |     | 40B    |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 2784A  |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 2786B  |
|       | Pheras (Thessaly)          | Public               |     | 2940B  |
| b     | Thessaly/Pandosia?         | Private              |     | 552A   |
| b     | Elimeia (Macedonia)        | Private              |     | 671A   |
| b     | Thessaly                   | Private              |     | 3738A  |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 3743B? |
| b     | Thyreion (Akarnania)       | Private              |     | 39A    |
|       |                            | Private?             |     | 1523B? |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 1729A  |
| b     | Echinoi (Akarnania)        | Private              |     | 345B   |
| b     | Alyzea (Aetolia)           | Private              | 63  |        |
| b     | Astacoi (Aetolia)          | Private              |     | 2086   |
| b     | Orchomenos (Boiotia)       | Private              |     | 186A   |
| b     | Opuntia (Opuntian Locris)  | Private              |     | 190B   |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 2323A? |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 3917A  |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 4132A? |
| b     | Oropos (Attica)            | Private              |     | 296A   |
| b     | Athens                     | Private              | 23  |        |
|       |                            | Private              | 52? |        |
| b     | Megara                     | Private              | 86  |        |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 1858A  |
| b     | Nemea                      | Private              |     | 1358B  |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 2646B  |
|       |                            | Private              |     | 3294A  |
| b     | Corinth                    | Private              |     | 3220A  |
|       |                            |                      |     | 3442B? |
| b     | Hermione (Argolis)         | Private              | 68B |        |
| b     | Sellasia (Laconia)         | Private              |     | 2416A  |

*Continued*

| Group | Center or area                                    | Kind of consultation | LOD        | DVC   |
|-------|---|----------------------|------------|-------|
| b     | Thuria (Messenia)                                 | Private              |            | 2554B |
|       |   | Private              |            | 1207B |
|       |   | Private              |            | 1878A |
| b     | Olympia   | Private              |            | 2986A |
|       |   | Private              |            | 3509A |
|       |   | Private              |            | 4079A |
|       |   | Private              |            | 4080B |
| b     | Meliteia (Achaia)                                 | Private              |            | 2024A |
| b     | Samai/Same (Cephalonia)                           | Private              |            | 4072A |
| b     | Kyme (Euboia)                                     | Private              |            | 35A   |
| b     | Chalcis   | Private              |            | 3304A |
| b     | Paroi   | Private              |            | 3146A |
| c     | Apollonia   | Private              | 50Aa<br>97 |       |
|       |   | Private              | 98         | 3     |
|       |   | Private              | 99         |       |
| c     | Epidamnos   | Private              |            | 1345A |
|       |   | Private              |            | 2052A |
|       |   | Private              |            | 3185  |
|       |   | Private              |            | 3965A |
|       |   | Public               | 6B         |       |
|       |   | Private              | 130A       |       |
|       |   | Private              | 130B       |       |
| c     | Pharoi (Illyria)                                  | Private              |            | 228B  |
|       |   | Private              |            | 463A  |
|       |   | Private              |            | 2762A |
|       |   | Private              |            | 3030A |
|       |   | Private              |            | 3517A |
| c     | Thronion (Illyria)                                | Public               |            | 1184B |
| c     | Adria (Veneto)                                    | Private              | 100        |       |
| c     | Taranto   | Public               | 5          |       |
|       |   | Public               | 6A         |       |
| c     | Heraklea of Lucania                               | Private              |            | 746A  |
|       |   | Private              |            | 806B  |
|       |   | Private              |            | 3079A |
| c     | Heraklea and Taranto                              | Private              | 132        | 3111  |
| c     | Oringaiioi (possible <i>ethnos</i> from Heraklea) | Private              | 126        |       |
|       |   | Private              | 111        | 959A  |
| c     | Thurii  | Private              |            | 967B  |

Continued

| Group | Center or area                           | Kind of consultation | LOD    | DVC          |
|-------|--|----------------------|--------|--------------|
| c     | Sybaris                                  | Private              | 133A   |              |
| c     | Rhegium                                  | Private?             | 154    |              |
| c     | Metapontum                               | Private              |        | 2333B        |
| c     | Hipponion (Vibo Valentia)                | Private?             | 156    | 2168         |
| c     | Sicily                                   | Private              | 102    |              |
| c     | Syracuse                                 | Private<br>Private   | 103    | 280A         |
| c     | Hergetium? (Sicily)                      | Private              | 75     | 1432         |
| c     | Messina and Ambrakia                     | Private              | 106A   |              |
| c     | Crotone                                  | Private<br>Private   | 114A-B | 24A-B<br>319 |
| c     | Miletus                                  | Private              |        | 135A         |
| d     | Nikaia (Illyria)                         | Private              |        | 713B         |
| d     | <i>Ethnos</i> of the Bylliones (Illyria) | Public               | 7      | 2364A        |
| d     | Penestae as Illyrian <i>ethnos</i> ?     | Private              |        | 3083         |
| d     | Lisson (Dalmatia)                        | Private              |        | 3200A        |
| d     | Persia? (Darius I?)                      | Private              |        | 3160A        |
| d     | Careia... and Egypt? <sup>144</sup>      | Private              | 129    |              |
| d     | Carthage                                 | Private              |        | 1363A        |
| d     | Bosphorus                                | Private              |        | 3899A        |

Two more features shed light on these data. First, as Cubera notes, some names in *DVC* can be linked to Illyria and Thrace.<sup>145</sup> Although the onomastic evidence does not automatically mean the individuals came from these territories, it is important to bear this in mind. The second is dialectal analysis. The best work on this front is still Lhôte's dissertation, published in 2006 and cited here as *LOD*. According to his study of 167 inscriptions the most frequent dialects are Dorian (Epirus, Corinthian colonies, Peloponnese), followed by Aeolian (Thessaly, Boiotia) and Attic-Ionic (At-

<sup>144</sup> The text contains a sign that might be demotic and the first line of the text has many interpretations.

<sup>145</sup> Cubera, 2013: Illyria: 73 (Τειτύκο), 2027B (Βάτων), 2144B (Ἐπιδύνα), 2241B (Δύντος), 2483 (Γέν-τις), 2609A (Πλαυράτα), 2979 (Ἐπίδακος and Ἐτούτα), 3550B (Τάτα). Thrace: 1369B (Κερδύλλας), 3515B (Κερσύλος).

tica and Ionia).<sup>146</sup> There is also evidence of Rhodian – closely linked to Dorian – in 118 and 144,<sup>147</sup> and koine during the Hellenistic period. Lhôte also sees a possible example of north Picene in 164 and the already mentioned 129, perhaps with an Egyptian sign.

Last, but not least, votives can contribute to this theme, again assuming that pilgrims might purchase them on their way, not in their sites of origin. The most recurrent styles are Lakonian and, over all, Corinthian.<sup>148</sup> The latter is easy to understand, for all the colonies in the shores of Epirus and the strong influence of Ambrakia, as one of the main starting points of the routes to the sanctuary. With regard to the other group, it is important not to think just about Sparta, but also Taranto. Since many people from Magna Graecia and Sicily went to Dodona, it makes sense to guess that some of them acquired their offerings in the Spartan colony. There are, however, a few offerings and dedications that do contain specific information concerning the origin of the object. For example several plaques, deposited by collectives, such as Athens<sup>149</sup> and the Cephalonian site of Paleis.<sup>150</sup> Among those brought by individuals, we have the well-known cases of the Zakynthian Agathon,<sup>151</sup> the Athenian Philinos,<sup>152</sup> and Sotairos from Cyprus.<sup>153</sup> This collection includes other offerings, such as the tripod of the *polis* of the Lechoians,<sup>154</sup> the greave of an Illyrian,<sup>155</sup> and a kylix from the Thessalian center of Pharsalia.<sup>156</sup>

A few pedestals and bases from Dodona mention the identity and origin of the dedicant: the Illyrian *Koinon* of the Bylliones (B12), the Epirote *Koinon* (B13 and B16). The recipients of these honorific statues were Epirotes. In general terms, Epirotes form the bulk of the consultants and the very few cases preserved in pedestals also reflect this. The majority of Hellas is present, as is the colonial world, most of them from Magna Graecia and Sicily, due in part, at least, to its close proximity. There are even references to farther realms, such as Carthage and the Bosphorus.<sup>157</sup> Illyria, despite being a neighboring area, has few representatives in the place, which might mean that Dodona preferred visitors from Hellenic territories.

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**146** Lhôte 2006, 363–380.

**147** Striano, 2017.

**148** Piccinini, 2017, 61–72 and 87–99.

**149** *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 73 (after 429).

**150** MA At. No. 1247 (5th cent.).

**151** *IG IX*<sup>2</sup> 1, 4, 1750 (ca. 330).

**152** MA At. No. 452 (4th cent.).

**153** MHA Wien (unknown reference, 4th cent.): Dieterle, 380, F601.

**154** MN At. No. 451 (5th cent.): Carapanos, 1878, 41, No. 4 and pl. XXIII, 3; Dieterle, 2007, 375, F411; Piccinini, 2012, 217–218.

**155** MA At. No. 1412 (5th cent.).

**156** MA Io., No. 160 (beginning of the 4th cent.).

**157** Piccinini mentions a cup found in Olbia, in the Bosphorus, that reads Ναίω (2012, 151–152). It could either be an anthroponym in that area or bear some connection with Zeus Naios.



A brief look at oracular consultations in our literary sources paints a different image. There are hardly any allusions to the colonies, but this is probably due to our sources, mainly from Athenian and Peloponnesian spheres. Apart from the accounts of Molossians consulting at the site,<sup>158</sup> most of the cases narrated are about Athens<sup>159</sup> and Sparta.<sup>160</sup> Although some references were surely later embellishments, these show a real tendency to consult the oracle. We may add the Thessalians, who made sacrifices to Achilles in Troy following the instructions of the oracle,<sup>161</sup> and the Lydian king Kroisos, if Herodotus' account is not a pseudo-historical passage.<sup>162</sup>

It is of note that all the passages cited above, with the exception of Pyrrhus', refer to episodes that took place between the Archaic period and the 4th century. If we look for later cases, we must wait for Julian the Apostate in the 4th century CE, who, according to Theodoretus of Cyrene, always consulted Delphi, Delos, and Dodona before a war.<sup>163</sup> I have found no references that fill this gap. A simple explanation is that consultations continued but are not preserved. Yet, this fact coincides with a massive reduction in offerings and the apparent decrease of lead plaques. Did oracular activity decline at this time? I will treat this question in the final section of this chapter.

The *theoroi*, or "official pilgrims", form another group of visitors to the site. Only a few are known, such as a group of Delphians sent to the shrine attested in an inscription dated in 220s.<sup>164</sup> An earlier case, an inscription from Argos ca. 330, states that the *theoroi* had Epirus as destination, among other places, with Kleopatra as the final destination. The event almost surely took place in the capital of the kingdom, but it is not inconceivable that Dodona could have served this purpose. The same reasoning may be applied to the third document, from Epidauros and dating ca. 360, where the *theorodokos* in charge of receiving the emissary was Tharyps, of the Molossians. Taking into account other kinds of visitors, on the occasion of manumissions performed in Dodona, most of the people came from different areas of Epirus, mainly Molossia. Nevertheless, those who received some kind of privilege such as the grant of citizenship and *proxenia* derived from areas outside the region.<sup>165</sup>

Last, but not least, numismatics too can help track the circulation of goods in the Greek world. Katsikoudis, in a recent study, counts 74 silver coins found in Dodona and stored in the Archaeological Museum of Ioannina. 32 of them are from

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<sup>158</sup> D.C., 9, 40, 6; Str., 6, 1, 5

<sup>159</sup> For example, Dem., 18, 253; 19, 297; 21, 51; 21, 53; *Ep.* 1, 16; *Ep.* 4, 3; Din., 1, 78; Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24; Plut., *Them.* 28, 5; Paus., 8, 11, 12;

<sup>160</sup> Diod.Sic., 15, 72, 3; Cic. *Div.* 1, 34 (76); Plut., *Lys.* 25, 3; *Mor.* 208F-209A. Cf. Piccinini, 2011.

<sup>161</sup> Philostr., *Her.* 53.

<sup>162</sup> Hdt., 1, 46–47.

<sup>163</sup> Thdt., *H.Rel.* 3, 21.

<sup>164</sup> Plassart, 1921, 1–85; cf. Daubner, 2018, 138.

<sup>165</sup> Citizenship: C2 (Nafpaktos), *SGDI* 1334 (Apollonia), 1338 (Achaia), 1339 (Brindisi), and 1345 (Macedonia). *Proxenia*: C3 (Pheras), C16 (Boiotia), *SEG* LVII, 510, ll. 54–84 (Larissa, in 130–129 BCE), *SGDI* 1340 (Agrigento), and 1341 (Argetia, in Athamania).

Chalcis, and the rest come from Kerkyra, Dyrrachio, Damastion, Thyrium, the Thessalian *Koinon*, Larissa, the Boiotian *Koinon*, Aigina, Corinth, Sycion, the Achaian *Koinon*, Elis, Pellini, and Macedonia.<sup>166</sup>

## 6.5 Pilgrimage – a phenomenological approach

Is it possible to study the symbolic perspective of pilgrimage? Which criteria do we have to take into account? Our way to conceive space and time is radically different to those of ancient societies or more recent ones. Since we live in a technological era where communications with almost all parts of the planet are possible, distance is no longer time for us; everything is within reach.<sup>167</sup> For pilgrims who traveled to Dodona, however, the perception was distinct. For them the trip implied not only a physical separation, but also symbolic, from their place of origin; a real disconnection which, although relatively brief, determined the way they experienced the journey. It is important to be aware that each pilgrimage is unique; each one has its own peculiarities. Besides, the enormous alteration of the perception of space and time in our current society makes the study of antiquity even more difficult. This does not mean that we should not try to understand how ancient cultures were or, more particularly, how their religious practice was. If we assume the existence of this gap, if we are aware of our limitations, we can try to face the issue.

In order to delve into this question, it is first necessary to stop in the meaning of perception. It is not just the way we see something, but also how we feel it with all our senses.<sup>168</sup> From that point on, we interpret what we observe and react according to our own experience and intuition.<sup>169</sup> The perception of a particular person is impossible to examine when dealing with ancient society, it is just feasible in present times. This reasoning, presented by Villoch, Santos, and Criado, among others, leads the scholar to focus on perception in a larger scale, the collective sphere. That is to say, how these sensations were directed and controlled; how they were imposed.<sup>170</sup>

Landscapes transmit memories. When we see a landscape, even if it is new for us, our mind automatically reacts with thoughts based on previous experiences.<sup>171</sup> We make comparisons and classify what we observe. A pilgrim, since she or he has a sacred place as destination, is likely to feel it according with this purpose and, therefore, the perception will be different than, for example, the one of a soldier that heads for a battle. In the same vein, for those who went to Dodona, depending on the activity they were to perform they had a different experience in both the jour-

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<sup>166</sup> Katsikoudis, 2013, 314–321.

<sup>167</sup> Janelle, 2017, 487–488 and 498.

<sup>168</sup> Betts, 2003, 7.

<sup>169</sup> Goodey, 1971, 4.

<sup>170</sup> Villoch, Santos and Criado, 1997, 20.

<sup>171</sup> Eberhard, 2009, 32 and 78–79.

ney and the visit itself. Each case had its peculiarities and through certain approaches we can obtain a behavioral pattern of specific elements. Other factors that have influence in this phenomenon were age and gender, for example.<sup>172</sup>

An individual ritual practice – such as private consultation – was different from a collective one. To carry on a group activity implies a connection among all the members and the religious rites were designed to control the feelings and reactions of the participants.<sup>173</sup> In Dodona, the main collective events attested in sources were manumissions, concessions and, over all, the Naia. Undoubtedly, whoever controlled the sanctuary could employ different mechanisms linked to the discourse of power and legitimation. In this sense, hierarchy played an important role, with a different perception according to the status of each person. *Symposia* were other kind of event that bound many people together, probably important members of each *ethne*, since the Archaic period.

The only attempt to reconstruct the feelings experienced by a pilgrim that went to Dodona comes from Scully, in his work published in 1962. He describes both the journey and the visit of the site. His narration considers the effort of the walk, the weather conditions and the terrain of the region. All these elements would enhance the sacredness of the experience.<sup>174</sup> When the pilgrim finally arrives to the shrine, the picture depicted is that of a sanctuary with a stunning distribution of the buildings, highlighting the connection between the place and the sky.<sup>175</sup> The account of this author is too literary, though. The constant mention of symbolic elements, such as the horns, which link to ancient traditions as far back as to Minoan times, makes this work a more Romantic than scientific approach. Then, to which degree can we consider this study reliable? Would a pilgrim in the 5th century have this sort of reasonings?

The essay of Scully belongs of the first steps of phenomenology. Linked to landscape archaeology, it uses a similar approach, but with a more specific perspective. Its aim is to reconstruct the perceptions and feelings of people. The scholar has to delve into our understanding of symbolism and the different ways of communication in the group or society, in order to be able to recognize certain behavioral patterns and to extract conclusions concerning how these collectives were structured.<sup>176</sup> The phenomenologist tries to carry on the practice itself, expecting to have a personal experience of the phenomenon.<sup>177</sup> However, this sort of studies is often criticized, mainly because it is impossible to prove that the aspects analyzed respond to a methodology or reasoning that existed in the past, or if they were just random.<sup>178</sup> Al-

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172 Gold and Goodey, 1989, 102–103; Darvill, 1999, 108.

173 Whitley, 2008, 93.

174 Scully, 1962, 136–137.

175 *Ibidem*, 137–138.

176 Betts, 2003, 19.

177 Tilley, 2008, 271.

178 Bradley, 2000, 42.

though one of the bases of phenomenology is that human beings, independent of the culture and time, have a body with a similar biological perception system,<sup>179</sup> it is true that we cannot reconstruct to such a deep degree the way ancient societies thought and felt. Their circumstances and determinants were completely different to ours and the result of this approach is too subjective.<sup>180</sup> Another critique is that phenomenology tends to see people as mere actors that do not participate of his or her actions, but is just guided by the social structure and customs. It is important to assume the personal and specific role of each individual,<sup>181</sup> although this implies having a rather subjective analysis, an impossible task for current scholars.

We need to find the middle ground. One has to be aware of the problems concerning this study and discard any attempt to reconstruct a particular experience of one single person. Instead, we have to focus on the collective process and to pay more attention to those elements that could have been especially significant. That is to say, we do not have to take into account patterns or mental structures of behavior, difficult to discern in an already extinct society. Some scholars have pointed out how the landscape visibility factor can diminish that subjective connotation.<sup>182</sup> This element considers the movement of the pilgrim as a pivotal element, since depending on the location and the trajectory the person has a different image of the place.<sup>183</sup>

Cult spaces are usually localized in spots with special features that impress the human eye and evoke feelings of astonishment and mystery.<sup>184</sup> This gives the site an uncommon connotation, different to daily life places. Visibility is a key factor when dealing with emblematic spaces. There is no doubt that one of the most important moments of pilgrimage to Dodona took place precisely when the visitor arrived there. The characteristics of the valley of Tcharacovitsa are remarkable and the sight of certain elements of the sanctuary as the pilgrim approached there follows the same vein. It stands out that the sacred space is located just to the south of the small hill with the fortified acropolis. This implies that those who came to Dodona from the north would not see the shrine until they almost arrived there. This is the main reason to assume that the most important access was the southern entrance. In this way, if the pilgrim walked from the south – the bottom of the valley – or the southeast – crossing the mountain through a pass after entering in the Ioannina plain – the visibility was better, especially in the latter case, where the traveler descended the slope and then could see the sanctuary. From afar the first element that would perceive the pilgrim was the large theater. While this person moved to-

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**179** Tilley, 2008, 272.

**180** Fleming, 2006, 268–275.

**181** Droogan, 2014, 123.

**182** Johnson, 2012, 279.

**183** Yasin, 2012, 267.

**184** Malkin, 1987, 142.

wards the sacred site, other structures were discernible. Thus, movement made the perception of this landscape a dynamic process.<sup>185</sup>

The distribution of buildings is never random. It can respond to a specific function in the place, but it is also possible that the choice of constructing a structure in a spot has a symbolic nature. The theater, for example, takes advantage of the slope of the hill, as usual in the Greek world. But its orientation was for sure a decisive point. Since the promontory is small it could have been erected in the western side or even in the northern one, if the main route had come from that area. But the interest of enhancing the perspective of the place according to the main route surely influenced that decision. The two stoas and the statues erected along them had a similar function, since they created a perception of depth once pilgrims accessed from the southern entrance. As they moved forward, they gazed at these elements. In front, they saw the temples and treasures. The orientation of these buildings seems to follow a specific order, but it is possible to perceive a certain trend of some of them to look at the central space between both stoas, where there are no remains of structures. Apparently, the other important constructions of the Hellenistic period, the *bouleuterion* and Building O-O1, are not located in special spots in comparison with the other cases. It is true, on the other hand, that from the western access that is what visitors saw first. The funnel-shape orientation of this entrance projects the sight to a wider space, the sacred area.

Although a bit embellished, the passage of Scully takes into account another factor, the effort required to reach the place. In Arcadia, the act of ascending to the top of the mountain where the sanctuary of Zeus Lykaeos stood was part of the ritual.<sup>186</sup> The mountainous area of Epirus and the territory of Dodona entailed for pilgrims a considerable effort, too. The path contributed in this way to construct the symbolic space where pilgrimage takes place.

There are a few studies of neuroscience focused on perception, a branch of cognitivism that attempts to delve into the theme of feelings and emotions to see how our mind produces specific cognitive experiences of what we see. This approach combines both symbolic and physiological spheres and takes into account the different parts of the brain and the role of each of our senses, as well as our memory.<sup>187</sup> The quandary of this analysis is the easier performance of the study in a current case, whereas it is more complex when dealing with already extinct cultures who understood the world in different ways. Cognitive archaeology aims to define universal and ahistorical patterns in culture and religion,<sup>188</sup> but scholars have to face the reality: each case has its particularities and develops in a specific context.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Yasin, 2012, 266.

<sup>186</sup> Nordquist, 2013, 177.

<sup>187</sup> Eberhard (2009) and Whitley (2008) are two of the main experts in this field.

<sup>188</sup> Droogan, 2014, 93.

<sup>189</sup> Kindt, 2012, 44.

It is possible, however, to put into practice this approach with at least two aspects of Dodona, both of them regarding corporal senses and the oracular activity.<sup>190</sup> First, sound surely played an important role through the employment of cauldrons on tripods and, in a later phase with the statue with a whip a unique cauldron. Second, consultations were written in lead tablets; pilgrims interacted in a more physical way than if they did it orally. Both senses, hearing and touch, enhance in the process of asking to Zeus Naïos and Dione. This implied a more active participation of the consultant and a more intense experience.

Inside the sanctuary, the movement of people was not as much random as they might have thought. Mobility consists on the interaction between the body and the surroundings, a striking factor in processions and rituals in sacred spaces for the experience and sensations generated.<sup>191</sup> Apparently, in the Spartan sanctuary of Artemis Ortia there was an open space with statues around it where rituals took place.<sup>192</sup> A simple glance on the *temenos* of Dodona is enough to see that the sanctuary had also this kind of open-air area, delimited by the southern entrance, the western and eastern stoas, and the northern line of temples and treasures. If this space was truly empty, it was undoubtedly used for the performance of religious practices and other events, such as the manumissions and grants of privileges.

Visitors stare at certain elements of the sanctuary according to the purpose of their visit. For example, those who came to consult the oracle would perceive more intensely the place where this act was going to take place, i.e. the temple of Zeus with the sacred oak. For the participants and attendants of the Naia, the theater and stadium would be the reference spot. At the same time, as they moved inside the sanctuary, they saw the statues on pedestals, which contributed to the symbolic construction of the Dodonaean landscape and provided a major political dimension that surpassed the temporal frontier, looking for enduring in time and legitimizing the dominant elites. The four inscriptions preserved in the bases show Epirote people as dedicatees and probably most of the rest were in the same manner, although since in Hellenistic times Epirus was inside the whole Greek geopolitics, which makes reasonable to think that neighbor regions had left a stamp on this space. Since some of the bronze sculptures have Macedonian characteristics, the eastern state is likely to have done it, mainly during the reign of Philip V, who helped to restore Dodona after the Aetolian attack in 219. The same pattern followed the dedication of weapons or other warlike objects of defeated enemies, such as the Roman and Macedonian shields in times of Pyrrhus.

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**190** Although this book employs this perspective, it is worth pointing out that sensorial archaeology can go further. The exploration of senses is not limited to corporal feelings, but can go deeper when trying to understand the essence of being, of life, the nature of dichotomies subject/object, mind/body (Hamilakis, 2015, 42). In this book, however, I have delimited a narrower approach to focus on more tangible aspects.

**191** Connelly, 2011, 316.

**192** *Ibidem*, 327–328.

These paragraphs have been an attempt to discern how people perceived the architectonic ensemble of Dodona from both outside and inside. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to understand it as a general perspective of the sanctuary, owing to the fact that I have merely analyzed the period of 4th-2nd centuries, when the place became monumentalized. How was it previously? The results of the excavations talk of an open-air site, with almost none permanent structures. Nature, therefore, had a major presence. If we take into account that precisely in the Hellenistic period the oracular activity declined, this means that most of the consultants saw, perceived, felt, a sanctuary completely different as the one we see now with many buildings. As Cardete sustains about Bassae, what was rebuilt, transformed, and manipulated was not only the place, but also the concept people had about it.<sup>193</sup> According to sources, the most significant elements in Dodona were the oak and the cauldrons on tripods. Precisely, we can interpret the replacement of the circle of cauldrons by a statue with just one as a search for a bigger visibility in a period when buildings began to gain importance and the traditional system did not stand out.

It seems that Dodona, despite its building process, did not lose that bond with nature. The territory around it possibly preserved its original features, as we might surmise from the text of Vibius Sequester, a late-empire writer that cataloged famous geographical spots and mentioned the famous woods of Dodona.<sup>194</sup> Perhaps the author just quoted older references, but this was not a common aspect of this sanctuary in ancient works. According to Bonnechere, this means that Dodona was in an *alsos*, a sacred forest or grove.<sup>195</sup> On the other hand, the passage clashes with previous accounts that refer to vast meadows, as Pindar and Hesiod say.<sup>196</sup> In any case, the mention of natural elements in the Dodonaean area was recurrent. I suggest interpreting this as a case of construction of landscape through language, as Pindar did also with Delphi.<sup>197</sup> Dodona itself did not become a highly monumentalized center. The dimensions of the site and the amount of buildings are quite modest for a place considered the most important sanctuary in Epirus and one of the most popular in Greece. Only the theater seems to be disproportionate. This was probably a conscious process of the ruling class for developing a more “modern” place that still preserved its “archaic and natural” character.

Pilgrims went to Dodona because they trusted their oracle. The more visitors there were, the more transmission of their experience to other people there was, whether oral or written.<sup>198</sup> Consequently, this led more people to consult Zeus Naios and Dione. Pilgrimage itself and the subsequent transmission contributed to the symbolic construction of the sanctuary as regards the Hellenic world. In other

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**193** Cardete del Olmo, 2004, 5.

**194** Vib., 4, 3.

**195** Bonnechere, 2007b, 24. As the author points out, *alsos* could even apply to just one tree.

**196** Pind., *Nem.*, 4, 49–56; Hes., *Fr.* 240 (= Str., 7, 7, 10).

**197** Eckerman, 2014.

**198** Coleman and Elsner, 1994, 74.



words, I attempt here to point out the importance not only of the trip to the shrine and the visit, but also of the return, since pilgrims explained their personal experience on the way back and when they arrived home. The construction of the landscape of Dodona, with its sensations, feelings, and memories, developed continuously and had as agents not just those who run the site, but also all the people that participated in the different activities the sanctuary offered. As Grau Mira states in a broader perspective, we have to be conscious that people are not passive subjects, but their actions contributed to the conditions that guaranteed the social reproduction and transformation.<sup>199</sup>

Crossing Epirus to reach the Tcharacovitsa valley from any area in the hinterland or from the harbors in the shores meant to pass through different territories. In a region divided into many *ethne*, walking towards Dodona implied to traverse the boundaries of many communities. Pilgrims who came from further areas acted as a link of communications between one territory and another. They could perceive both the particularities of each *ethnos* and the common character and customs of all of them.

## 6.6 Conclusions – Changes in pilgrimage and oracular activity

This chapter has shed light on several central aspects related to the pilgrimage of Dodona. As discussed above, this phenomenon covered a remarkable variety of activities, from consulting the oracle to the participation in agonistic competitions. The sanctuary had several dimensions, too, depending on the person who visited it. As Kindt explains about Olympia, the trend of examining religion in its duality of local-panhellenic is too simplistic, since there were more intermediate stages.<sup>200</sup> In Dodona we can discern at least four levels. First, it was a local place for the inhabitants of the surroundings that in the Hellenistic period tended to go to new minor shrines, such as Rodotopi and Vaxia. Second, it was a regional center for the Molossians, whose sub-*ethne* elites used the site for the celebration of *symposia* or other common events and rituals.<sup>201</sup> The inscriptions that register manumissions and grants of citizenship or privileges show also how the frontiers of the territory fluctuated. Third, Dodona was the main sanctuary for all the Epirotes in the superregional sphere, unlikely the federal capital of the *Koinon* in 232–167 but at least surely a place for common meetings as the religious capital. Fourth, it was a panhellenic enclave for the entire Greek world, as we can see for example in authors like Herodotus, in the oracular consultations, and in the celebration of the Naia.

It is necessary to find an explanation for the striking contrast between the apparent decline of the oracular activity and, in a lesser degree, the votives, and the mon-

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<sup>199</sup> Grau Mira, 2010, 103.

<sup>200</sup> Kindt, 2012, 153–154 and 193.

<sup>201</sup> Domínguez, 2018, 23.

umentalization of Dodona during the 5th-2nd centuries. There might be a reason for each one if we examine them independently. The fewer amount of lead plaques could be due to wrong datings. As noted above, some scholars suggest a later chronology for many of them.<sup>202</sup> But since there is no publication that examines this issue thoroughly, this book takes into account the current available data. In the same vein, the absence of references to consultations in literature from the 3rd century BCE – except one of Pyrrhus – to the Late Roman Empire could be due to the loss of the works that mention them or that authors from that period paid more attention to other themes. However, considered all together, the situation is more complex.

In the development of a sanctuary not only the evolution of its surroundings has influence, but also whatever happens in a major scale. The apparent decline of the oracular activity – not Dodona itself, which experiences precisely the opposite – coincides with the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic periods. This phase of the Greek culture is characterized by a great complexity, with changes and alterations in all levels. The organization system of the *polis* is modified and so is its interaction with the sanctuaries;<sup>203</sup> the Hellenistic states emerge, struggling to define their frontiers and their power. In Epirus, the supreme state was the kingdom of Molossia, whose disappearance led to the formation of the Epirote *Koinon*. The impact of all these occurrences in Dodona is obvious, with the erection of buildings and monuments of different sorts. At first sight, one may think this was the reason for the decline of oracular activity. That is to say, less people traveled to Dodona to consult to Zeus Naios and Dione because the place was no longer the same and the control by the Molossian kingdom, and later the *Koinon*, turned it into a less trustworthy oracle. The episode of Olympias, who did not allow the Athenians to perform the rituals they were told by the shrine itself, could be a good argument for this theory. However, this explanation is too simplistic. The sanctuary was important in the Greek world because of its oracle even in Roman times, as suggested by all sources, primarily literature. It is not reasonable to think that the ruling classes that controlled Dodona altered to such extent the place without evaluating the loss of prestige it might have as a consequence. In fact, it is not clear that this process could affect the apparent “neutrality” of the oracle, since most of the consultations belong to daily life matters. Thus, we need to consider this question from a broader perspective – religion and oracles in Hellenistic times.

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**202** Mainly Meyer (2013, 20, n. 33), Méndez Dosuna (2016, 119) and Lhôte (2018).

**203** Recently some scholars, such as Melfi, reject the idea of such a radical change in Hellenistic times. According to them, the behavioral patterns do not seem to be much different from the previous periods. The real milestone came with the Roman presence in Greece (2016). With regard to this question, I do think there were significant alterations in the way people and communities understood and experienced religion. That does not mean to assume a deep transformation, but at least different manners of interaction with religious activity.

No monograph analyzes religion in this period in a complete way, due to the enormous magnitude of information and territories to take into account.<sup>204</sup> Some authors stress the coexistence of continuities and innovations. New cults came from further cultures and regions that were now connected to the Greek world.<sup>205</sup> As a consequence, there was a great diversification of the religious practice. Oracles, once a reference point of religion in the Archaic and Classical ages, were now just one of the many possibilities for Hellenistic people. The information we have about its activity and the consultations in Greece comes from a short list of places, which means that the conclusions we can obtain are a biased image of reality. Besides, there are no general works focused on Hellenistic oracles, but studies of specific sanctuaries, without a more integrating approach that considers all of them. Even with all that, some scholars notice a certain decrease of oracular activity in the Hellenistic period,<sup>206</sup> due to the introduction of new fortune-telling practices.<sup>207</sup> On the other hand, other authors identify the trend to dedicate votive offerings – statues of people, portraits, figurines – linked to new cults.<sup>208</sup>

After Dodona, Delphi is the second oracle with more information. It is the paradigmatic place where *poleis* and *koina* showed their power and influence through the erection of buildings and monuments, trying to alter the landscape and its symbolism to offer a different image of the past that benefited to whoever controlled the site.<sup>209</sup> It does not seem that this fact affected its fame and prestige for centuries, but there is evidence of its decline after Alexander the Great, at least its oracular activity, and this situation endured both Hellenistic and Roman periods.<sup>210</sup> During part of the 3rd century the Aetolian *Koinon* controlled Delphi and there is almost no presence of other powerful states, such as those of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.<sup>211</sup> This coincides with a smaller number of consultations to the oracle, although Parke and Wormell compiled several examples in literature and epigraphy.<sup>212</sup> But later scholars have criticized the difficulty in proving if those references are reliable and they have focused on the archaeological evidence.<sup>213</sup> In any case, all of them agree that in the Hellenistic period the oracular activity was more limited.<sup>214</sup>

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**204** Kindt, 2012, 27–28.

**205** Malkinson, 2006.

**206** Piñero Sáenz, 1989, 59, who says that they revived in Imperial times; Hernández de la Fuente, 2008, 245–248, who sees the opposite, a major decline in the Roman period.

**207** Potter 2003, 426–427.

**208** Bobou, 2016, 189–192. In the case of Dodona, we have seen that human-size statues were usual, but small figurines had a lower importance. Besides, it is uncertain if there were new cults in the Hellenistic period.

**209** Scott, 2010, 145.

**210** Fontenrose, 1978, 5.

**211** Scott, 2014, 173.

**212** Parke and Wormell, 1956, 103–172.

**213** Scott, 2010, 6.

**214** Parke and Wormell, 1956a, 244–262.

Didyma, in Ionia, was active already in the 6th century, destroyed in the Persian Wars and restored in the epoch of Alexander the Great.<sup>215</sup> In his work of this sanctuary, Fontenrose cataloged consultations from the 6th century until the Imperial period. In Hellenistic times there are nine historical, seven quasi-historical, and five fragments of what were probably real questions.<sup>216</sup> All of them had a public nature, usually performed by Miletus or one of their colonies, as well as some kings, as Alexander the Great. The private ones belong to other epochs. This shrine and the one of Claros, both of them in the shore of Anatolia, were two of the main Greek oracles at the end of the Hellenistic Age and mainly during the Roman period.<sup>217</sup> In Claros, most of the consultations cover the 2nd-6th centuries CE.<sup>218</sup> Another noteworthy site, Trophonios in the Boiotian center of Lebadea, ran from the 7th century<sup>219</sup> and there is oracular activity until the 1st century BCE. There are only a few references and several of them are clearly fictional. It is possible that some of them are dated to Hellenistic times, but 5th and 4th centuries are most frequent.<sup>220</sup>

These were the most significant oracles in the Greek sphere. Their activity in the Hellenistic period is attested, although there is a certain trend to decline that apparently changed in the Roman phase, when some of them revived. The main problem is that most of the consultations in these places were public, whereas in Dodona the private ones were more recurrent. Unfortunately, the striking dearth of information about the private activity in other sites does not allow a proper comparison between them. One may assume there were private consultations in all of them, but sources have not preserved those testimonies.

It is therefore difficult to obtain a conclusion about the situation of oracles in Hellenistic Greece in both public and private spheres. The evidence shows a general decline of activity, surely due to the diversification of the religious practice because of the opening of Greece to other cultures and territories. Besides, the alteration of the system of the *polis* probably had influence on this phenomenon. Another factor to take into account in Molossia is the emergence or strengthening of minor sacred sites, which led to a reduction of the local activity in the bigger one, Dodona. The elites might have turned to their nearby shrines, whereas Dodona was more connected with a superregional concerning, the entire Epirus, as some of the pedestals of the statues show. This reasoning applies primarily to those areas, such as Epirus, where the *ethne* and urban development changed drastically from the 4th century onwards. In short, the apparent decline of pilgrimage for oracular purposes in Dodona can be explained through a combination of different aspects, from regional to broader per-

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215 Fontenrose, 1988, 14–15.

216 *Ibidem*, 1988, 179 ss.

217 Johnston, 2008, 88.

218 Busine, 2014, 202.

219 Bonnechere, 2007a, 156.

220 Bonnechere, 2003, 364–367.

spectives, from Molossia to the entire Greek world, which experienced enormous changes in this period that transformed the way their population lived until then.

# 7 The Polyfunctionality of the Sanctuary

## 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have analyzed different aspects that are linked to Dodona in several spheres. The aim now is to take a more holistic view and apply an approach that considers the polyfunctionality of the place, the roles it played as a religious, political, economic, and socio-cultural center. All these features were not isolated, but entangled in a complex framework, like the sides that form a geometrical figure. This assumption applies not just to Dodona, but to the majority of cult places. The aim here is to present an approach that can be employed for more sites in future works. Before this, however, it is necessary to discuss some specific points that can help to clarify this reasoning.

The first one is the sort of sanctuary Dodona was. Most research in this line focuses on urban and extra-urban shrines, a theme where de Polignac's work made a revolutionary contribution a few decades ago.<sup>1</sup> In all these cases the sacred sites are connected to a *polis* or center.<sup>2</sup> The reality of Molossia makes this assumption more difficult, since some of the minor sanctuaries seem to have had bonds not with a specific site – in Rodotopi we can confirm its link with Megalo Gardiki –, but with the community that inhabited the area. Since most of the works examine extra-urban sanctuaries from a *polis* perspective, the phenomenon of regions like Molossia was surely just an alternative way of organization in a territory developed with ethnical rather than urban ties.

Dodona belongs to a different class of sanctuary, those called inter-states, “located beyond the borders of the many states which utilized them”.<sup>3</sup> As Morgan explains, this brief definition actually hides a complex reality with many hints. Some scholars have attempted to discern the main features of these sites. There is a common trend to erect monumental buildings and votives proliferate at the end of the 7th century or the beginning of the 6th.<sup>4</sup> In Dodona the first aspect did not take place in this time due to the late development of Epirus. Inter-state sanctuaries were usually panhellenic<sup>5</sup> and they commonly acted as neutral spots in the routes between states.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, these shrines were the scene where *poleis* and communities competed among them in a peaceful way to show their power and perform rituals together.<sup>7</sup> Theoretically, any state could control them for their own benefit. Dodona does not match ex-

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1 De Polignac, 1984.

2 Edlund, 1987, 41–42; Polignac, 1994, 4; Antonaccio, 1994, 83–84; Malkin, 1996, 76; Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 38–39; Fourrier (2013).

3 Morgan, 1990, 20.

4 *Ibidem*, 5 and 16.

5 *Ibidem*, 24.

6 Snodgrass, 1986, 54.

7 Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 393.

actly with these features, but a glance at those sanctuaries considered inter-states makes clear that the patterns do not coincide in many aspects.

The most recurrent ones in scholar studies are Olympia and Delphi, and we can add Didyma, Delos, and Anthela to the list. Marinatos also suggests Nemea.<sup>8</sup> It is true that, except Olympia, the other sites were not close to a powerful urban center. But this does not mean they had autonomy, since we have seen for example that the Aetolian *Koinon* dominated Delphi during part of the 3rd century. Olympia was in the zone of influence of Elis,<sup>9</sup> same as Athens with Delos in the 5th century. As Morgan explains, inter-state sanctuaries changed their neutral nature as certain sites began to rule them, in a process that showed up with the construction of buildings and the development of great festivals.<sup>10</sup> The criteria for this sort of religious places are therefore not fixed, but pretty variable. In essence, they were cult spaces located in the frontiers of big *poleis* or *ethne* that had a different evolution than urban and extra-urban sanctuaries. Dodona does seem to have been one of them, although some characteristics appear in later time due to the historical context of Epirus. It is possible also to discard that Dodona was a mere local or regional shrine, since all sources show a very distinct image.

Panhellenism is another concept where I would like to stop briefly because of its implications for the study of Dodona. The idea is usually linked to the definition of Strabo about the “common sanctuaries”: people from different *poleis* and *ethne* gathered in these places and celebrated festivals and assemblies together. Through *symposia* and other similar events they strengthened their common bonds.<sup>11</sup> Panhellenic shrines were therefore places where the different communities of the Greek world went together, communicated and competed among them.<sup>12</sup> The four Great Games were one of the manifestations of this phenomenon. Scholars tend to see the emergence of these places in the 8th-6th centuries without a panhellenic nature, or at least in a process not completed yet. According to Hall, the conscious employment of the concept began in the 5th century, when Perikles summoned the presence of all Greeks to deal with the sanctuaries destroyed by the Persians.<sup>13</sup> Recently, Scott has called into question this idea. After examining Olympia and Delphi, he came to a different conclusion, which highlights how individuals and communities perceived and used these shrines in multiple ways.<sup>14</sup> At the same time that these sanctuaries promoted Greek unity,<sup>15</sup> they were the perfect scenery for each collective to

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<sup>8</sup> Marinatos, 1993, 230.

<sup>9</sup> Emerson, 2007, 50.

<sup>10</sup> Morgan, 1990, 16; 1993, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Str., 9, 3, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Morgan, 1993, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Hall, 2002, 206.

<sup>14</sup> Scott, 2010, 216–217 and 251.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 267.



display its own identity, i.e. the differences with others. Considering that, panhellenism did not thoroughly develop until the Roman period.<sup>16</sup>

I consider this reasoning too strict. Instead of understanding panhellenism as “the Hellenic unity”, it would be more appropriate to see it as “the Hellenic presence or participation”, pointing out the existence of certain cultural elements that were common to all the participants. It cannot be denied that the concept originally attempted to have that connotation of unity, either as a consequence of the Persian Wars or from the Roman perspective, which saw all Greeks as a whole. However, in a wider sense these sanctuaries had many aspects which all inhabitants of the Hellenic world identified with. At the same time – not instead of – they could claim their own particularities.

Does this description apply to the case of Dodona? Baslez argues that it was panhellenic once the Naia started, according to him, in the 3rd century.<sup>17</sup> For Piccinini, pilgrimage shows a broader scope in previous periods. Although in the 7th-6th centuries visitors came from further areas, it is too soon to consider the place as panhellenic, but there is plenty of evidence of this fact already in the 5th,<sup>18</sup> when both oracular consultations and votives abound. In this epoch Dodona functioned already as a sanctuary of this kind, as we can see when Herodotus himself refers to it as the most ancient oracle of Greece. What we see in later centuries is the development of a major polyfunctionality in the site, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate.

## 7.2 Dodona as a religious center

For Greeks and Romans, Dodona was above all an oracular sanctuary. Although there were more activities here, literature has suggested that the place was always a reference point because of the oracle. Apparently, this perception did not change over time, even when sources show a certain decline from the Hellenistic period onwards. The evidence suggests that in Archaic and Classical times the main attraction for people to go to Dodona was to consult Zeus Naios and Dione. The mention of the site in the Homeric verses and the reference of Herodotus to its archaic character were decisive factors that contributed to the definition of its prestige. At the same time, its marginal and frontier location, in a territory between the Greek or “civilized” and the barbarian or “wild” would lend it this liminal connotation that tied it to the borders of the Hellenic world and to other suggesting aspects, such as the recommendation of making sacrifices to the river-god Achelous.

Dodona experienced changes at all levels over its long-standing lifetime. The most notorious one was the monumentalization process, a common trend in Greek

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 262 and 269.

<sup>17</sup> Baslez, 1999, 392.

<sup>18</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 269 and 281.

sanctuaries that in this case happened in later times because of the specific context of Epirus. There is evidence of alterations in the oracular consultation, and the mixture of theories in ancient works about how it functioned could be a consequence of this. In any case, it seems that the sacred oak and the cauldrons on tripods – first a circle, then a statue striking just one – were the prevailing elements.

Cults also evolved. In origin, it is possible that there was a martial deity later on fused with the figure of Zeus Naïos, who in its depiction of Zeus Keraunios might show this nature. It is not clear if we can talk about another cult linked to fertility that lately endured with the goddess Dione and perhaps even with the daughter of this couple in this mythical tradition, Aphrodite. The significance of Dione, in any case, went further from the Dodonaean boundaries and reached places such as Athens, up to the point that the Attic *polis* and Olympias had a confrontation because of some rites regarding its worship.

Dodona as a religious site, therefore, was not a static entity, but was constantly redefined. It is possible to reconstruct through the available sources at least partially the complex process where context is paramount, since this study covers seven centuries of development.

### 7.3 Dodona as a political center

Same as religion, politics was part of daily life and was present in cult spaces, whose landscape and the elements that shape it were configured by the political activity and historical processes that developed over time. The mechanisms of control and exhibition of the ideology of elites had impact on the site in both material and symbolic spheres. Through a corporal and sensorial experience in certain events that were repeated, this intentionality grew stronger and was understood by those who felt part of the group not just as cultural products, but also as natural expressions.<sup>19</sup> There was a conscious employment and alteration of landscape, determined by the political discourse. This process is built with a specific rationality that brings an implicit symbolic appropriation of space through a strategy of visibility that responds to different factors. By means of the visual perception of the site, the final goal of it is to regulate the perception of the place. Landmarks delimit a temporal milestone and disseminate the ideology. Whereas they are conceived with a specific temporality, they are expected to endure and extend their message over generations.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 43.

<sup>20</sup> Canosa, 2016.

### 7.3.1 Sanctuaries as political scenery

A shrine was a place where people did not simply worship their gods. Religion is not isolated in the complex framework of a given society. A sacred site was a suitable space for the transmission of the ideology and for the strengthening of collective identity and the forging of it. Many of the mechanisms employed were assimilated in religious practice to such degree that they became a natural and essential part of it. Sometimes we can discern this physically, but the abstract level played also an important role. As Kindt states, we have to understand the symbolic dimension of Greek religion as intrinsic and entangled in the negotiation of socio-political power.<sup>21</sup> Each case is particular, it is never exactly equal to another. However, we can see patterns in the elaboration and performance of ideological discourse.

There are plenty of studies concerning politics in sanctuaries and the evolution of this process over the centuries. The most recurrent cases are Delphi, Olympia, Delos, Labraunda, and Samothrace. It is not the aim of this section to delve into each one of these places, but just to highlight some aspects for a better understanding of this. Probably the most notorious manifestation took place in the Phocian oracle with Apollo as tutelary deity. There, pilgrims walked a path completely surrounded with a plethora of structures, monuments, and statues, erected from the 6th century onwards.<sup>22</sup> *Poleis* and communities invested in this place their resources to claim their own identity, not just its hellenicity.<sup>23</sup> It was a competition because of the typology and magnificence of their architectonic elements, but also a symbolic one since they belonged to their own collective discourse.

We can see this kind of propaganda in the seat of the Olympic Games, but with some peculiarities. Dedications were displayed in the sacred space in different ways that guided and manipulated how people perceived the site, with the honorific statues as the best example.<sup>24</sup> Elis was the center that usually controlled Olympia,<sup>25</sup> except sometimes Pisa.<sup>26</sup> The ups and downs of this submission had a direct repercussion in its landscape, as we can see with the replacement in the 7th century of dedications by monumental buildings that reorganized the ritual practice and enhanced the cult of Pelops and perhaps also Hera. This coincided with the period when Pisa ran the site.<sup>27</sup> The panhellenic nature of Olympia did not avoid the sanctuary to become at the same time a pandorian space, where the different Dorian communities expressed their identity.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kindt, 2012, 89.

<sup>22</sup> Maaß, 2007, 35.

<sup>23</sup> Scott, 2010, 226.

<sup>24</sup> Kindt, 2012, 134.

<sup>25</sup> Emerson, 2007, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Taita, 2007, 34–35.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, 2010, 150–151.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 163.

Occasionally, politics is circumscribed to a shorter zone of influence, for instance a dynasty. This is what we can see in Delos, which became a noteworthy place for the staging of the power of the Antigonids through the erection of buildings and monuments, the offering of dedications in temples, and the foundation of festivals.<sup>29</sup> In Samothrace, Philip II, aiming to get the support of the sanctuary, built a temple. His son Alexander continued the same initiative and donated them some lands in the Thracian coast.<sup>30</sup> Labraunda, in Caria, was connected to the city of Mylassa, which developed a complex project of monumentalization of the site and the construction of a sacred way. In this case, the Hekatomnid dynasty was involved in it at least during the 3rd-1st centuries.<sup>31</sup>

There are some obvious coincidences with Dodona and, at the same time, the Epirote sanctuary has its own peculiarities. Same as Olympia with respect to the Dorian area, it was a common place for all the *ethne* of Epirus. We can see also the meddling of a ruling family in the development of the shrine, with the Aeacids proceeding in the same way as the Antigonids and Hekatomnids. The late monumentalization of the site is one of the differences. This fact did not take place on a large scale. Its dimensions were still limited and the character of the buildings, except for the theater, was not too monumental. This development was conscious, probably with the goal of transforming, but not radically, the Dodonaean landscape. The sanctuary stood out because of the antiquity of its oracle. However, the purpose here is not to highlight the archaic nature of the site, as we see in the Arcadian Lykaion,<sup>32</sup> but to strengthen a well-known reality. The symbolic image of Dodona as a “natural” place that we see in literature would have been confronted with a splendid architectural complex.

It is easy to seek for evidence of politics in Dodona in the period of 4th century onwards, but looking for it in the previous epochs requires a deeper insight. Offerings are the main source. They do not belong to a unique activity, like the oracular consultations, but to a wider amount of religious and social practices. I would like to further discuss on the materials with a sympotic nature. These votives are primarily bronze vases of different kinds, mostly craterae, and figurines that were attached to them as handles or mere ornaments. Undoubtedly the celebration of feasts was allocated to meetings of the elites of the region. Since Epirus was organized into *ethne*, the possibility that the collective that controlled the sanctuary and the ruling classes of neighbor areas gathered here for *symposia* is reasonable. Surely already in the 5th century, at least in the last decades, the Molossian monarchy employed this mechanism with the Aeacid kings as the center of the banquet. The emergence of the Alliance, later turned into the *Koinon*, would entail the gradual presence of more ethnic

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<sup>29</sup> Mitropoulos, 2012, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Matsas, 2010, 38–40.

<sup>31</sup> Williamson, 2012, 121.

<sup>32</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 169.

representation in the Dodonaean space. Probably some of the warlike votives are connected to this same practice.

The pedestals and their honorific statues are another physical evidence of politics. Their distribution clearly seeks to show the people depicted in the sculptures, the collective that they represented and the community that dedicated them. There are no remains of statues of gods, but all of them seem to have been warriors, standing or riding a horse. When the *Koinon* of the Bylliones erected a sculpture to honor Chrison, son of Sabyrtos, they ensured their presence in Dodona not only for that specific moment, but to endure. Pedestals were aligned in parallel with the two stoas, plus a few ones east to the *bouleuterion* and among the temples and treasuries. Surely there were specific criteria for their location spot. The four inscriptions preserved are next to the *bouleuterion*, so we cannot know for sure if all the cases followed the same pattern of a *koinon* or other kind of collective making such dedicatory to a particular. I suggest that the most privileged space, probably that among the temples and treasuries, was reserved for those communities that were more connected to the buildings and to the sanctuary itself – for example, the Molossians near Building A, or the Chaonians near Building Λ. We can understand this as a part of the legitimization discourse and the performance of their power and influence in the site. Same as in Delphi,<sup>33</sup> treasuries and pedestals were not oriented towards the temple of Apollo, but in a way that pilgrims could see and appreciate them better.

Another element of this discourse is the metal plaques and stelae exposed to the public and that register manumissions and grants of rights. The political dimension of these documents is remarkable. In the text itself we can see the ruling class, the king or the *strategos*, as well as other officers. Besides, the concessions showed the opening and scope of the frontiers in the Molossian state and the *Koinon*. A good example is SEG LVII, 510, a late decree found in Larissa that refers to a confrontation between Molossians and Akarnanians in 130 – 129. The document states that the resolution of the conflict had to be registered in that stela discovered in the Thessalian center because that was the origin of the judges, and also it was required to bring a copy to Dodona. The fact that this decision involved this sanctuary means it was still a trustworthy place for both Molossians and Akarnanians, the perfect place for the display of this kind of political documents. However, we have also an example of the opposite intention. The stela that concerned the boundaries of Ambrakia and Charadros dated to the decade of 160 and mentioned in a previous chapter indicates that two copies had to be sent to Olympia and to the sanctuary of Apollo Kerdoios in Larissa, besides the original one of Ambrakia. One may wonder why to the Elean shrine and not to Dodona. As Cabanes and Andréou suggest, this decision was made soon after Rome conquered Epirus in 167. Since the Molossian *ethnos* suffered a severe punishment, Dodona might have symbolized this collective and the struggle

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<sup>33</sup> Pedley, 2005, 8.

with the new rulers, and probably both Ambrakia and Charadros preferred to set themselves apart from it.<sup>34</sup>

Some of the objects dedicated in Dodona are connected to specific events. The most evident ones are the Roman and the Macedonian shields, both in times of Pyrrhus, which commemorated the victories of the king over his enemies. This is another proof of how religious space was at the same time political, an ideal place where elites showed their deeds. The existence of a *bouleuterion*, and perhaps also a *prytaneion*, follows the same vein. Zeus himself appears with the epithet Bouleos in the inscription of altar of the *bouleuterion*<sup>35</sup> and in an oracular response.<sup>36</sup> The theater could also have functioned in this way too, something not uncommon in Greece.<sup>37</sup> In Athens, for example, the meetings of the *ekklesia* took place sometimes in the theater, where there was enough space for all the attendants.<sup>38</sup> Dakaris registered the finding in the theater of terracotta shards similar to those discovered in the *bouleuterion*; although they might have been tickets, we might also interpret them as voting ballots.<sup>39</sup>

### 7.3.2 Political control of cult spaces

We already know the name of the state that had power over the Epirote sanctuary: the Molossian kingdom, organized as a *koinon* in the 4th century, surely conserved this predominance during the period of the Alliance and, after the fall of the monarchy, the Epirote *Koinon* (232–167). The Molossian presence in Dodona is doubtless attested in the 4th century, whereas it is not clear whether they have already influence in the 5th; surely there was, at least in the last decades. Archaeologists discovered moulds for minting coins dated to the beginning of the 4th century.<sup>40</sup> We can interpret this as the *terminus post quem* of this effective control, although it means that probably the process began earlier, at least with the reign of Tharyps. Before that the degree of autonomy of Dodona is uncertain, but the sympotic votives of the previous centuries evince the celebration of events probably by the ruling classes of the region.

I have already referred to the importance of the antique character of the sanctuary, which may have functioned as a decoy for the prestige of the oracle. The Molossian monarchy also knew how to employ a similar mechanism that followed the general trend of the elites, the elaboration of a heroic genealogy. This is a good example

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<sup>34</sup> Cabanes and Andréou, 1985, 513.

<sup>35</sup> C18.

<sup>36</sup> *LOD* 142.

<sup>37</sup> Moustakis, 2006, 113.

<sup>38</sup> Hansen and Fischer-Hansen, 1994, 51–53.

<sup>39</sup> Dakaris, 1971, 61.

<sup>40</sup> Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 132.

of the way space and time are modeled according to a strategy of construction of reality.<sup>41</sup> The Aeacid dynasty was believed to descend from Neoptolemus, son of Achilles.<sup>42</sup> In some mythical traditions, the hero had a child called Molossos, the eponymous of the *ethnos*, who ruled here, with the alternative version of Pielos as the son of Neoptolemus that inherited the throne.<sup>43</sup> This ancient bond of the ruling family ran in parallel with the image of Dodona and the entire Epirus, the place where Deucalion and Pyrrha survived to the flood, a myth elaborated not later than the 6th century.<sup>44</sup> That this tradition was active during the Hellenistic period is confirmed by the dedication of Agathon, who claims the condition of his family as *proxenoi* of the Molossians and their allies for thirty generations after Troy.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the sanctuary was the best place to display this votive plaque. It is strange that this genealogy is not preserved in the material evidence of Dodona. The only ones that we can link to genealogies are the two reliefs of Herakles. One may surmise that there were also similar elements of Neoptolemus, mainly in Building A, which I consider the Molossian treasury.

Olympias offers the most obvious case of political control of the sanctuary. In her struggle with Athens with regard to the celebration of certain rites to venerate Dione, the queen or regent exercised her rights – from her point of view – to control everything that happened in the – her – shrine. The Athenian trend to expand their influence far from their frontiers was seen by Olympias as an obstacle for the growing Molossian power in its own territory. She was determined to avoid it even when, according to Hyperides, the oracle of Dodona itself had ordered Athens to do it. The policy of the regent is easy to understand if we consider the context. The date of the speech is just before 330 and Alexander I of Molossia died in his campaign in Italy in 331. This passage means that Olympias was probably regent alone, or perhaps together with Cleopatra, who would not have got involved in the conflict if that were the case. We can interpret her behavior in Dodona as a strategy to consolidate her position in a time when her situation was weak.

Olympias might have had prominence in the construction of the temple of Dione and the promotion of this cult. The dating of Building Γ, temple of Themis in the conventional theory but of Dione in this study, is established in 330/325–232. The goddess was worshipped in Dodona since centuries ago, but through the erection of a structure to venerate her, Olympias could have had strengthened her power in the sanctuary and, by extension, in Molossia. Moreover, cults of goddesses in this region seem to have been significant, at least in the sites identified as shrines. At the same time, with this mechanism the regent could have had channeled the traditions and

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<sup>41</sup> Hernando Gonzalo, 1999, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Paus., 1, 11, 1. For this topic, see Kittelä, 2013; Chapinal-Heras, 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Paus., 1, 11, 2; Justino, *Epit.*, 17, 3, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Hes., *Fr.* 2, 3 and 4; Hellanic., *FrGH* 125; Plut., *Pyrrh.* 1, 1 (who in fact states that they founded Dodona).

<sup>45</sup> *IG IX<sup>2</sup>* 1, 4, 1750.



customs of her subjects, integrating her legitimizing political message in the religious discourse and, in this way, making its assimilation easier.

In the period of the Epirote *Koinon* we can see an effective control of Dodona in the events of manumissions and concessions. If the theories of Building E2 and *bouleuterion* and O-01-02 as *prytaneion* are right, the function of meeting place – religious capital of the federal state, headquarters of the Molossian *ethnos* – would work in the same vein. Likewise, in this book I have suggested that Building Θ was the treasury of the *Koinon*, where the confederation would keep its incomes and wealth and, at the same time, it would represent to all the *ethne* members of the federal state.

### 7.3.3 Politics, religion, and identity

We can find a strong identity connotation in this political discourse. At the same time the ruler employs certain tools to legitimize his or her position, it is frequent to send a message that encourages the union of the population based on the common identity. Sanctuaries are usual spaces for this sort of expressions, either through the erection of monuments of other physical elements, or through the celebration of events that involved all or a representative part of the population.<sup>46</sup> A good example to illustrate this is the sanctuary of the Despoina in Arcadia, whose monumentalization contributed to palliate the internal dissension.<sup>47</sup> This kind of mechanisms strengthened the ethnical integration.<sup>48</sup>

The placing of statues on pedestals that commemorated important acts of Epirotes follows the same reasoning. If we add civic buildings such as the *bouleuterion*, and the grants of citizenship and other decrees, it is clear that the religious landscape of Dodona was consciously constructed. Religion, politics, and a regional identity – panmolossian first, panepirote later – were parts of the same ensemble in the shrine. Votive offerings could have been also an individual or collective attempt to contribute to this project.<sup>49</sup> Finally, if the hypothesis concerning the treasuries is right, we can understand it in the same context. We are talking therefore about identity discourses in different degrees and with different destinataires.

A sacred space can be political not only in the physical sphere, but also its image, its landscape, can be transferred to other dimensions, such as numismatics. A remarkable amount of the series of coins of the Molossian kingdom, the Alliance, and the *Koinon* had Dodonaean motifs, as in a bronze drachma of ca. 300 with the oak and three doves in the obverse, a silver didrachma with the portrayal of Zeus Naios and Dione, and another piece that depicts a tripod. These coins did not circu-

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<sup>46</sup> Funke, 2013, 12.

<sup>47</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 147.

<sup>48</sup> Rizakis, 2013, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Kindt, 2012, 123–154.

late only in Epirus, but everywhere their bearers went. When people saw these images, they would automatically think about the states that minted them and the sanctuary of Dodona. The icons of the shrine were therefore associated with the collective identity, either Molossian, the Alliance, or the *Koinon*. Moreover, when Pyrrhus I reached the Macedonian throne he minted new series for his entire empire. It is possible that the depiction of oak-leaves crowns in some of them is also due to Dodona.<sup>50</sup>

#### 7.3.4 An amphictyony in Dodona?

As a result of her hypothesis concerning the revision of the evidence of the Alliance that concludes that there was not such *symmachia*, Meyer formulates a new theory about the nature of Dodona. In her view, in the 4th century there could have been an amphictyony in the sanctuary, at the same time that the Molossian monarchy had influence on the site.<sup>51</sup> There are just a few cases of this kind of organization that turns a religious center into the core of a regional network<sup>52</sup> and that is focused on the management and development of the place.<sup>53</sup> The most famous one is Delphi, but we can mention the Calaurian<sup>54</sup> and the Panionian in Mycale.<sup>55</sup>

The main reason for Meyer to suggest this hypothesis is the presence of different categories of officers in Dodona in this period, the *damiorgoi*, the *hieromnamones*, and the *synarchontes*. Instead of being state magistracies, they would have been the evidence of an amphictyony and they may show the evolution of the same position with different names that changed over time.<sup>56</sup> The theory is reasonable if we compare it with Delphi, where we can see certain parallelisms.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, this is based on the assumption that there was not an Alliance and that what the inscriptions of Dodona show is not the political structure of Molossia neither the later *symmachia*, but the own organization around the sanctuary. Thus, I do not support this opinion. It is more probable that these documents do reflect the evolution of the region.

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<sup>50</sup> Moustakis, 2006, 132–139.

<sup>51</sup> Meyer, 2013, 60; 2015, 300–305.

<sup>52</sup> Funke, 2013, 10.

<sup>53</sup> Constantakopoulou, 2015, 275.

<sup>54</sup> Forrest, 2000, 284.

<sup>55</sup> Kindt, 2012, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Meyer, 2013, 88; 2015, 305.

<sup>57</sup> For a complete history of the Delphic Amphictyony, see Sánchez, 2001.

## 7.4 Dodona as an economic hub

The polyfunctionality of Dodona covers also the economic sphere, as it happens in all the sites since human activity generates a network for the exchange of goods and services. In this context, sanctuaries surely played a prominent role because they were safe spaces where divergent collectives would find easier to get in contact and interact.<sup>58</sup> For this approach, I follow the essential lines of the arguments of Finley and his later followers, who support the idea of agriculture and stockbreeding as the main economic activities in a self-sufficient system.<sup>59</sup> However, I do think that commerce, albeit secondary, was one of the main mechanisms of interaction among communities, with sacred places as reference enclaves. Studies focused on the economic dimension of sanctuaries are scarce and are usually just a section of a broader global analysis of economy.<sup>60</sup>

### 7.4.1 Stockbreeding

With the orography as a strong determinant, shepherding was the core of the economy in Epirus, a territory where until almost the Hellenistic period most of the population lived in villages of small or medium size. With a region divided into *ethne* that were separated by numerous valleys and mountains, scholars have traditionally seen transhumance as the phenomenon that connected all of them. We can see the employment of this concept of transhumance concerning the entire Greece.<sup>61</sup> However, I would like to point out that this specific activity of shepherding implied the existence of a larger framework and a powerful state to control and sustain it, as we can see for example with the Mesta in Mediaeval Iberian kingdoms. Lewthwaite and Cherry were two of the main former critics of the assumption that there was such a complex large-scale system in most of Antiquity. According to them, it consisted of a combination of agriculture with small-scale shepherding.<sup>62</sup> Cardete applies an updated reasoning to this question in her recent monograph about Pan in Arcadia, another Greek territory conventionally connected to transhumance. We can surpass this controversy if we understand this activity in a lower degree and within shorter distances, that is to say, *trasterminance*. Its scope is more limited and normally linked to ovicaprid cattle – at least in Arcadia, where it was the most recurrent one.<sup>63</sup> The movement of shepherds is therefore more “vertical”, from lower to higher locations, instead of “horizontal”, which has longer shifts. Not all scholars support

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<sup>58</sup> Steinsapir, 2005, 88.

<sup>59</sup> Finley, 1973; Hopkins, 1983, x-xi; Andreau, 2002, 34.

<sup>60</sup> Dillon, 1997, 214–217; Migeotte, 2009, 48–49.

<sup>61</sup> Skydsgaard, 1988, 80; Hodkinson, 1990.

<sup>62</sup> Lewthwaite, 1981, 61; Cherry, 1988; cf. Sánchez Moreno, 1998, 56–59.

<sup>63</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 106–107.

this model, though.<sup>64</sup> However, given the context of Epirus and its internal fragmentation until the emergence of the Epirote *Koinon*, trasterminance – just considered as a minor-scale transhumance – is a more reasonable economic system.

Although most of the studies highlight the predominance of animal husbandry in Epirus,<sup>65</sup> there is also a trend to interpret the base of the economy of this territory as a combination of agriculture and stockbreeding.<sup>66</sup> In any case, the orography had influence on this phenomenon with a probable distribution of the activity in each valley, instead of in a wider degree. Literature evinces the importance of bovine and ovine cattle,<sup>67</sup> as well as the good fame of Molossian shepherding dogs.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, dogs were a common iconographic type in coins from both Molossia and Epirus.<sup>69</sup> The materiality of this activity in archaeology is not always easy to find.<sup>70</sup> Fortunately, there is certain information in places like Vitsa, where bones of many animals of this kind appeared.<sup>71</sup> The site, active from the 9th century to the 4th, was surely one of the core centers in the network of shepherding and routes in the hinterland of Epirus. In numismatics, the depiction of a bull in some series of the Alliance and the *Koinon* is likely to be the claim of its significance.<sup>72</sup>

In Dodona, although I have already mentioned the finding of bones, its purpose – shepherding, sacrifices, those of the theater for fights in Roman times – is still uncertain. Other traceable evidence is the sort of offerings. Among the archaic and classical materials, there were figurines of goats, bulls, and dogs, although not in a bigger amount than other zoomorphic statuettes. What is more surprising is its absence in the Hellenistic period, at least in the bibliography consulted and firmly dated. It could have been a consequence of the promotion of other facets of the shrine and the way society was involved in the place. In oracular epigraphy we can see four consultations related with stockbreeding presumably made by shepherds, all of them with a chronology of the 4th century and before.<sup>73</sup> In the mythical sphere, one of the stories about the foundation of the oracle tells that a shepherd, Mardylas, was about to cut an oak when the tree spoke and stopped him, turning into the famous sacred oak.<sup>74</sup> In real life, it is highly probable that the origin of Dodona was linked to

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<sup>64</sup> Sánchez Moreno, 1998, 78.

<sup>65</sup> Cabanes, 1990, 73–75; Quantin, 1999; Hammond, 2000, 352; Hatzopoulos, 2003, 55–56; Dausse, 2011c, 231–237.

<sup>66</sup> Douzougli and Papadopoulos, 2010, 9–11; Papadopoulos, 2016, 447–449. In the Ioannina basin, for example, agriculture was surely the main activity (Domínguez, 2018, 26).

<sup>67</sup> Hes., *Fr.* 240; Pind., *Nem.*, 4, 49–56; Arist., *Hist.an.* 3, 21, 13–25 (522b); Arist., *Hist.an.* 8, 7, 17–24; Plin., *HN* 8, 176; Zen., 2, 83.

<sup>68</sup> Arist., *Hist.an.* 9, 608a, 27–33.

<sup>69</sup> Franke, 1961, *passim*; Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, *passim*.

<sup>70</sup> Cherry, 1988, 19.

<sup>71</sup> Mazarakis-Ainian, 1997, 294.

<sup>72</sup> Papaevangelou-Genakos, 2013, 136–138 and 141–146.

<sup>73</sup> *LOD* 80, *DVC* 1415A, 2331A and 1199.

<sup>74</sup> Proxen., *FGrHis* 703 F7.

this activity, as Quantin defends.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, considering the importance of stock-breeding in the region, the sanctuary may have possessed sacred herds. The function of cattle in these cases was to please the god.<sup>76</sup> A more practical purpose, on the other hand, was to use them for sacrifices.<sup>77</sup>

#### 7.4.2 Sanctuaries as landholders

*SGDI* 1365, a copper plaque from Dodona dated to the 4th century, registers a donation made by Symmachos to Dione of all his properties, an arable land in Kossos, pasture fields in Atherion, vineyards in the area of Kotas and a plot suitable for construction. It is meaningful that the recipient was Dione, not Zeus Naios neither both of them, which points out the importance of the cult of this goddess.<sup>78</sup> This is the best evidence for the topic of this section, sanctuaries as landholders.

This fact was usual in the Greek world. Shrines themselves could make use of their terrains, lease them or just conserve them without labor, as purely sacred lands.<sup>79</sup> The economic profit of these properties was evident, with Labraunda,<sup>80</sup> Eleusis<sup>81</sup> and over all Delphi as examples.<sup>82</sup> In the sanctuary of Athena Alea in Tegea there are decrees of epinomia among shepherds. These treaties allowed them to use the pasture fields of the site for free during one day and one night if they participated in the festival of Tripanegeria, paying one drachma for each cow or pig, or one obol for each goat or sheep, if they remained more time.<sup>83</sup> Land lease was precisely a very useful and enriching way for sanctuaries. It helped to finance the maintenance of the place and the activities that took place there.<sup>84</sup> One of the most complete studies concerning this issue belongs to Papazarkadas. Focused in Athens, his calculations point to a 1–2% of the annual income of the polis in the late Classical period. Since most of the lands were in private hands and Athens had other more profitable sources of revenues, it seems that land lease was a minor issue.<sup>85</sup>

The situation would be different, however, in a place such as Dodona. The only testimony here is therefore *SGDI* 1365. The location of the lands mentioned is uncertain, but one may presume that not all of them were in the surroundings. In any case,

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<sup>75</sup> Quantin, 2007.

<sup>76</sup> Lambrinoudakis, 2005, 321–322.

<sup>77</sup> Psaroudakis, 2000, 24–27. In this paper, the author presents a useful list of sources that attest this phenomenon all around the Greek world.

<sup>78</sup> Chandezon, 2003, 102–105; Horster, 2004, 92.

<sup>79</sup> Horster, 2010, 439–451.

<sup>80</sup> Blid, 2012, 188.

<sup>81</sup> Horster, 2010, 451.

<sup>82</sup> Sánchez, 2001, 473.

<sup>83</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 105–106.

<sup>84</sup> Horster, 2004, 216.

<sup>85</sup> Papazarkadas, 2011, 92–98.

the possibility that the sanctuary owned part of the territory of the valley of Tcharacovitsa is suggesting. Part of those lands could have been leased, indeed. There were people in the center in charge of the management and administration of the properties. It is unknown if this responsibility fell on the selloi, the peleïades, or other officers. There were also slaves. In Silandos, for example, a sacred slave confessed he had had sex with a flutist in the cult area,<sup>86</sup> whereas the shrine of Aphrodite in Corinth possessed more than one thousand women slaves that worked as *hetairai*, which gave enormous earnings to the site.<sup>87</sup> There is no information about this topic in Dodona, but we can assume there were slaves, too, especially in the Hellenistic period, in the same vein that the building development that entailed more tasks to carry out.

### 7.4.3 Sanctuaries as banks

Bogaert, one of the main experts in this field, discerned three kinds of actions: deposits, loans, and changes.<sup>88</sup> He demonstrated that at least 25 Greek sanctuaries were bankers for *poleis*, *koina*, and the treasurers themselves. Since the place was considered sacred, it was expected to be more protected. Besides, temples were also solid constructions. There were officers in charge of this role.<sup>89</sup> Ephesus, Delphi, and Priene seem to have been the most popular choices for those communities that sought for a bank. Still, Dodona does not appear in sources for this purpose. With regard to this, we can make lucubrations. According to sources, both panhellenic and local shrines acted as bankers, with a preeminence of the former ones.

There are not references of sites in northern Greece but, since Dodona was the main sanctuary in Epirus, I suggest it functioned as a bank at least for particulars or collectives of this territory. It is less likely that communities from further areas wanted to deposit their wealth, ask for loans, or accomplish changes here. It is more reasonable therefore to delimit the scope to the big *ethne* and the Epirote *Koinon*. Perhaps also Athens, since sources attest its close bond with Dodona. If Dodona developed this banking role it would have been probably once there were buildings in the place. Unfortunately, there is no specific information regarding this topic.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Chaniotis, 2012, 91–93.

<sup>87</sup> Str., 8, 20.

<sup>88</sup> Bogaert, 1968, 279–304; 1976, 42–70.

<sup>89</sup> Bogaert, 1968, 299.

<sup>90</sup> The only element could be in Building E1, the temple of Zeus Naïos, a small stone structure dated to the 5th century and preserved in three fragments. It bears the inscription ἡ τράπεζα and it is too small for being an altar. Piccinini interprets it as a secondary cult object (Piccinini, 2012, 188). Her reasoning is surely right, since it seems to be an offering table. On the other hand, the term τράπεζα was precisely the most common one when talking about a money exchange table. The earliest known case appears in speeches of 4th century Athenian orators, though (Bogaert, 1968, 37), which means that the one in Dodona is less likely to have had that function.

#### 7.4.4 Commerce

Talking of commerce in Antiquity is complicated. The way we understand it depends on the approach and point of view with regard to its framework, functioning, and limits. This study follows the view of *poleis* and communities as self-sufficient sites and with commerce reduced to a minor-scale activity that mainly took place in small local markets.<sup>91</sup> But “reduced” does not mean “inexistent”, since many raw materials and products were always demanded and their transportation entailed the movement of people by land and above all by boat.<sup>92</sup> Sanctuaries were significant points in these networks, as both recipient and emitting points. Labraunda, for example, was crucial in the Carian commerce.<sup>93</sup> Something similar would have happened in Dodona, located near the crossroad of the main routes in the hinterland of Epirus during the entire lifetime of the site. Unfortunately, there are no buildings clearly connected with this activity, except some materials for the production of purple dye that appeared in the *bouleuterion* and date to Roman times.<sup>94</sup>

There are, however, some aspects where we can see the importance and development of commerce. One of them is the raw materials for construction. The main ones in sanctuaries were timber and stone, both of them of different kinds and origins. In other Hellenic places, there are 5th and 4th century buildings that indicate the purchase and cost of supplies for this purpose. Sometimes they came from the surroundings of the site, but in other cases it was necessary to get them from further distances, contributing in this way to the traffic of goods, to imports and exports.<sup>95</sup>

This phenomenon began in Dodona not later than at the end of the 4th century. The rock employed for most of the buildings is limestone and there is an abundance of this material in the Tcharacovitsa valley.<sup>96</sup> This was a reasonable solution for a place located in the hinterland in a region whose orography made more difficult the transportation of these materials. The costs of obtaining it in the nearby would be much lower. We can see the opposite case, for example in Epidauros, where stone from Corinth was used.<sup>97</sup> One can also surmise that the degree of importance and the wealth of the community that controlled each sanctuary influenced the possibilities of purchasing or not expensive materials. According to Dakaris, the area of the quarries was about 2 km north-northeast of the sanctuary, although the better-quality limestone of the pedestals and the propyla of the theater probably came from a bit further, from the villages of Marmara and Grammenochoria, 4–5 hours

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<sup>91</sup> Hopkins, 1983, xi ss.

<sup>92</sup> Snodgrass, 1983, 16; Hopkins, 1983, xx; Hopper, 1979, 52.

<sup>93</sup> Blid, 2012, 156 and 189.

<sup>94</sup> Bowden, 2003, 40–42.

<sup>95</sup> Hopper, 1979, 142–146.

<sup>96</sup> Higgins and Higgins, 1996, 99.

<sup>97</sup> Burford, 1960, 7.



to the sanctuary on foot. With regard to the conglomerated stone used in a few cases, it was obtained in the southern part of the same valley.<sup>98</sup>

All this means the outline of a network for the extraction and movement of the materials. Since this activity took place when Dodona was already in the zone of influence of the Molossian kings, this state organized the process and disposed of qualified personnel and officers for its management and development, workers for the quarries and builders for the construction, as usual in these cases. This entailed the coming of merchants, the acquisition of goods for all of them, and the payment of salaries, among other aspects.

Metals were other materials brought to Dodona for different purposes. One of them was the production of coins, same in other cult places.<sup>99</sup> It is confirmed that there was a mint in the Epirote sanctuary and most of the series seem to have been in bronze. This material was the result of the alloy of copper, tin, and zinc. The main mines were located in Chalcis and Eretria.<sup>100</sup> Since no chemical analysis of the objects made in Dodona has been accomplished, it is difficult to know its origin. But this is not in fact necessary to assume that there were commercial lines to get these materials. The importation of bronze began in Dodona as a need for the elaboration of locally-made figurines to deposit as votives. Although archaeologists have not identified workshops in the site, the analogy with other shrines<sup>101</sup> allows us to think that in Dodona there were too, as well as stores.<sup>102</sup> In certain moments of the year, primarily during the celebration of the Naia, presumably itinerant craftsmen would come to the sanctuary because they expected to make profit of the event, as we see for example in Olympia.<sup>103</sup>

Lead was another metal with a peculiar use in Dodona. Extracted in silver mines as byproduct,<sup>104</sup> it was therefore a low-value material and nonetheless necessary in the Epirote shrine for the oracular plaques. Again in this case, there has not been any chemical analysis of it, which means that we cannot know where the lead came from. Since there are not silver mines documented in Epirus, it was imported from further locations. Hammond, talking about the similitudes among some archaic silver jewels found in Dodona and the ones from the Macedonian site of Trebenishte, suggested that the raw material was obtained in the mines of Damastium, cited by Strabo.<sup>105</sup> Precisely the Corinthian presence in Epirus since Archaic times might be partly due to their interest on the route to access this re-

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<sup>98</sup> Dakaris, 1971b, 77.

<sup>99</sup> Von Reden, 1995, 177–178.

<sup>100</sup> Hopper, 1979, 164.

<sup>101</sup> Migeotte, 2009, 97.

<sup>102</sup> Thuc., 6, 44, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Morgan, 1993, 23.

<sup>104</sup> Stos-Gale and Gale, 1982, 467.

<sup>105</sup> Str., 7, 7, 8. Hammond, 1967, 437–439.

source.<sup>106</sup> In later centuries, when contacts with Athens were regular and strong, the *polis* could have provided this source from the mines in Laurion.<sup>107</sup> The lead would have arrived together with the silver.

With regard to its transportation, lead is one of the heaviest metals, so it required more effort to bring it. Nonetheless, it was not necessary to carry an enormous amount of lead, since the plaques were very thin and it was normal to reuse them. More than 1,000 pieces are preserved and cover from 6th to 2nd centuries. Undoubtedly, this represents just a reduced percentage of the total, but even with that we cannot expect frequent acquisitions of lead. It arrived more probably in small quantities that endured for a long time.

We may wonder if pilgrims had to pay for purchasing the plaques in order to consult the oracle. There is no reference concerning this possibility that in fact would have reported benefits to the site. This would also help to explain why pilgrims did not bring them home – if it was forbidden, the oracle could reuse them and therefore do not spend more on the elaboration of new ones, which happened just periodically. At the same time, the tablets were not sacred elements themselves and because of that they were not disposed in ritual deposits.

This aspect has brought into scene a logical subject when talking about economy in the sanctuary: the impact of pilgrimage. It was closely linked to commerce in the sense that visitors attracted business, so they could purchase whatever they needed. There were certain acts that were more specific, though. One of them was the oracular consultation itself, which was not free. We do not know how much it cost in Dodona, but in Delphi the citizens of Phaselis as a collective had to pay in 420 seven *drachmae* and two *oboloi* for one question, whereas a particular of this site spent a tenth of this price. Around 370, the rate for the government of Sciathos, an island in the Sporades, was cheaper; in case they wanted to buy an animal in the temple for a sacrifice they had to pay two *oboloi* if it was a community or one if a particular.<sup>108</sup> The tradition of purchasing an animal or some bloodless foodstuff for this purpose was typical, so it was surely in Dodona. Apart from this, the personnel of the place received remuneration for their work in the various sacrifices they performed; this is called *apometra* and *hierosyna*, and whilst the former probably consisted on part of the food of the sacrifice or other kind of offering, the latter is understood as the quantity that the person that orders the sacrifices assumes.<sup>109</sup>

A sanctuary usually had certain basic services, such as accommodation and provisions for pilgrims. No *katagogion* has been found here, but there are some spaces where visitors could overnight, as for example the stoas. Before, there were permanent buildings, perhaps the ellipsoidal structure functioned for that, although it is more probable that they slept under the stars or with temporal tents. For the food,

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<sup>106</sup> Piccinini, 2017, 61.

<sup>107</sup> Hammond, 1967, 544–545.

<sup>108</sup> Hernández de la Fuente, 2008, 145–146.

<sup>109</sup> Connolly, 2007, 198.

undoubtedly there were stores and booths to buy it. One may surmise that they were in the residential area, in the acropolis, if the theory that the *asty* of Dodona was located there is right.

The evolution and dynamism of Dodona reflect on its economic development. Apart from the oracle, the main activity during the Archaic and Classical periods seems to have been the *symposia*, whereas in Hellenistic times the functions of the sacred space boosted greatly. The economic impact was evident, as these pages have shown, in a gradually rising process. Those who went to take part in the manumissions and concessions, those who came to deposit an offering, or those who traveled here to participate or attend the Naia, all of them contributed to the economic development of Dodona. Precisely, festivals were always accompanied by markets, which provided for the basic needs of pilgrims, but also other sort of products, such as ritual items.<sup>110</sup> In events that took place in *poleis* or large settlements, local shopkeepers made profit together with itinerant traders. But for cases such as Dodona, the later ones were the collective that benefited.<sup>111</sup> The internal life of the sanctuary was also another factor. The maintenance of the cult, the salaries of all the personnel,<sup>112</sup> the administration of the site, and the organization of the archives, were just a few of the tasks that every religious place had.<sup>113</sup>

## 7.5 Dodona as a socio-cultural center

The sanctuary was a place of transmission and exchange of ideas and knowledge. People coming from diverse sites arrived in order to, for example, consult the oracle. An oracle that in fact had to be up-to-date with the news and the most relevant occurrences in order to have more solid arguments for the responses of the questions. But this presence was not limited to arriving, carrying on the purpose and leaving, without interaction. Pilgrims would spend some time there and this implies socialization, to meet other visitors, to share experiences. The materials associated to banquets, whether they are connected or not to oracular activity, are one of the most remarkable expressions of the socio-cultural facet of Dodona. The deposit of offerings, the meaning of each one of these votives, as well as the iconography of the buildings in the *temenos*, transmitted beliefs and ideas. In other words, they reflected the culture and customs of those who placed them there and of the public that was expected to contemplate them. Some of these materials talk of mythology – figurines of pegasus, gryphons, gods – or of social practice and activities – animals linked to

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<sup>110</sup> Dillon, 1997, 214–216.

<sup>111</sup> De Ligt and De Neeve, 1988, 396–400. For this topic, see Chandezon, 2000, 70–100, esp. 92–96. The author gives a complete account of both epigraphic and literary sources regarding the different aspects related to the economic function of markets and fairs.

<sup>112</sup> Connelly, 2007, 198–199.

<sup>113</sup> Migeotte, 2009, 48–49.

stockbreeding, symposiasts lying. Surely each votive had more meanings, a symbolic value for the person or collective who offered them; but inevitably this is lost and what we can see now is their common cultural features.

In the case of Dodona, the celebration of manumissions and grants of citizenship or other privileges accentuated the social role of the sanctuary. These events are an essential part of the social evolution of the Greek world. The concessions show the interaction far from the frontiers of the community, far from the territory of Dodona and the surrounding *ethne*. This social and cultural opening proves that Epirus was not isolated at all. On the other hand, these documents date to the 4th century onwards, although the information from other sources leads to conclude that the region, especially Dodona, was not as marginalized as it was previously thought. At the end of the Classical period contacts increased.

Four manumissions of Dodona bear a formula difficult to interpret: ξενικαὶ λύσει ἀπολύει, with variations in the order of the words.<sup>114</sup> The expression is attested in other places, as for example in Thessaly, although in a short version without ἀπολύει. In the case of Dodona, it could refer to the liberation of slaves captured in war after receiving a bailout. But for other cases this explanation does not work. Trying to apply a global solution, Zelnick-Abramovitz suggests understanding it as “discharge from the obligation to pay the taxes of *xenoi*”, that is to say, that they became freedmen with certain privileges.<sup>115</sup>

The Naia bring us to a specific sphere of the cultural manifestation in ancient Greece that shows an important feature of the society and the identity development: agonistic competitions. Thanks to epigraphy we know about winners in athletic events, such as pentathlon, wrestling, pankration, and boxing, as well as one in dramatic contest, a tragedy. There are no remains of a palestra, or at least archaeologists have not discovered it yet, but we do know a theater and a stadium. The disproportionate dimensions of the theater compared with the size of the sanctuary can be a reflection of the significance of the activities that took place there. Artistic competitions are likely to have existed already in the 5th century, as some dedications of rhapsodes may indicate. In this period Dodona was still an open-air sanctuary, but not just the seat of an oracle and the place chosen by the elite to celebrate *symposia* periodically. It was probably also a regional competition space.

One of the main reasons for people to participate in agones was the prestige acquired if they went back home as winners. If the theory of the Naia already in the Classical Age is true, then the votive dedications of Terpsikles and Klearchos are the evidence that the prestige was expected to endure more time, that people in later generations remembered them. The same purpose sought those who registered their victories in the events in their commemorative stelae.

114 C68, SGDI 1351, SGDI 1354, SGDI 1360.

115 Zelnick-Abramovitz, 2005, 76–81.

The Naia were important in Dodona not just because they were agonistic competitions, a mark of the Greek culture, but because they had a deeper meaning and value. They were a symbol of integration to various degrees. We have seen that not everybody considered Epirus as part of the Greek world. The hellenicity of this population was a debate issue for authors of all the periods. They had common characteristics, such as the same language, the same religion, and they shared some cultural traditions. However, their border location and their limited participation and presence in the main occurrences in Archaic and most of Classical periods surely influenced the way the Epirote territory was perceived as a frontier space, halfway between the Greek and the barbarian. Precisely one of the mechanisms to enhance the hellenicity could have been the agonistic competitions. They were able to integrate the society of the regions by highlighting the identity and, at the same time, they could expand a broader message to the whole Greek world. One of the best examples was Macedonia in the Olympic Games, where it is said that Alexander I Philhellene was allowed to participate thanks to his supposed Argive genealogy ties.<sup>116</sup> Alexander the Great was aware of this, too, and maintained this practice during his campaign in Asia as a method of propaganda of the Greek culture.<sup>117</sup>

If we assume that the Naia already existed in the Classical Age, it might have had a regional nature with participants mostly from the Epirote territory. This could have been a remarkable mechanism to unite the multiple *ethne*, to promote the feeling of belonging to the same collective. The transformation experienced in the 3rd century is attested in inscriptions that clearly show a major scope and transcendence of these agones. With participants coming from further areas, it is reasonable to interpret the Naia as panhellenic games. Panhellenism, considered as “the presence of all the Greeks” instead of “the union of all the Greeks”, as Scott supports, is what we see in Dodona. It is possible to understand the sanctuary as a panhellenic enclave already in the 6th century, when the first oracular consultations written in lead plaques appear.

The Naia surely pointed out not only the hellenicity of Dodona, but also that of the organizers of the event, that is to say, the Molossian kingdom, the Alliance, and the Epirote *Koinon*. Assuming that the conscious employment of this mechanism was a real fact, the Molossian elites – and later in a wider perspective the Epirote ones – knew how to define it in their discourse that legitimized themselves in their own territory and also in further areas, enhancing the Greek character of the Naia and, by extension, of Molossia and Epirus.

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<sup>116</sup> Hdt., 5, 22. The account is however not completely reliable.

<sup>117</sup> Adams, 2014, 341.

## 7.6 Conclusions – A polyfunctional site in an Epirote scope

Understanding the evolution of the sanctuary of Dodona implies to pay attention to its multifaceted development. In a constant change, its landscape was a cult space and also a place for social and political legitimation, for cultural expressions, for commercial exchange. Same as a pilgrim came to consult the oracle, an itinerant merchant moved here for making profit. Their experiences, although they were different because the purpose was distinct, took place in the same site. Something similar would happen to the elites that celebrated here their *symposia* and other events. For them, Dodona was a space for gathering and competition, where they could show their wealth and power; a regional spot that constructed the social network. Their material evidence was preserved since archaic times in the form of sympotic votives and, perhaps, warlike offerings. Dodona became gradually an icon. An icon of the Molossian *ethnos* first and Epirote community later; but in parallel it was also a Greek element in a territory seen as a limbo between the Hellenic and the barbarian. Illyria was never considered Greek, but its southern neighbor was always divided between both points of view. At the same time, the sanctuary probably played another symbolic role as a frontier spot, as the sacrifices to Achelous and the stop of the Hyperboreans suggest. As a shrine located in the fringes of the Greek territory, in a relatively mysterious and marginal area, its prestige and fame increased.

It is possible that the image of Dodona was put on the same level as Epirus itself. We can see a parallelism in Arcadia. The perspective of a united Arcadia, with all its communities joining together, is a complex issue. Megalopolis accomplished some movements to highlight those aspects that converged in a panarcadian picture. This center did not invent the Arcadians, but the idea of Arcadia as a unique entity in the political or cultural spheres.<sup>118</sup> We can see some similarities in Dodona. The evidence shows that, first from the Molossian monarchy, and then from the *Koinon*, there was a conscious attempt to change the image of Epirus from an almost barbarian territory to a more complex and Hellenic vision. As Moustakis explains, Epirus did not have an eponymous hero, as Aetolia (Aetolus) or Akarnania (Akarnan) did have. The original concept of Epirus was geographic.<sup>119</sup> We know that there were eponymous figures in the *ethne*, as Molossus in Molossia. For this reason, it was necessary to carry out a construction of a supraethnic identity that covered the entire Epirus.

Phoenike was probably the capital of the *Koinon*, but the possibility of choosing the Dodona for events that involved all the communities of the federal state, especially in the religious sphere, would have contributed to this discourse. Obviously, this does not mean that Dodona was the only element in the process, but that the sanctuary was one of the mechanisms consciously employed to achieve the cohesion of

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<sup>118</sup> Cardete del Olmo, 2016, 138.

<sup>119</sup> Moustakis, 2006, 104.

the Epirote identity. A necessary identity for the elite to consolidate their position and also to be able to face other tasks, such as struggles with neighboring states. In the Social War the Aetolian *Koinon* invaded Epirus and, among other places, plundered Dodona. This surely entailed the strengthening of the Epirote population as a whole, who saw their common shrine desecrated. In fact, the decision of attacking Dodona was probably due to the importance of the site in the Epirote context, since it was its federal sanctuary.<sup>120</sup>

In numismatics we have the graphic manifestation of this process. The oak and the doves are the most evident expression of this message, as well as the depiction of Zeus Naios and Dione together. The oak-leaves crown, probably the prize in the Naia, would have been an alternative way. Another icon was the tripod, a panhellenic element that in Dodona took part in the oracular consultation. There are three dimensions in this object: the local, for Dodona; the Epirus, for the identity; and the Hellenic, for it was recurrent since already the Geometric period.

The claiming for hellenicity was present in the Naia. This might be the reason why the theater had such an enormous size. It is difficult to assume that the shrine received so many visitors during most events as to fill up the stands, unless the mobilization of people in the region was higher than usual; but it is unlikely. I suggest the key was the search for a major visibility of one of the elements that were more associated to Greek culture, the theater, influenced this decision. This was precisely the first building pilgrims saw when they arrived to the southern or southeastern entrances, and therefore the one that caused a major visual impact.

In this process, it was the regional elites who conducted the way Dodona developed, the way the elements and features of the sanctuary influenced the experience and perception of visitors. As we see in Delphi, Olympia, or Delos, the supposed neutrality of these inter-states was false. They were political spaces where the ruling minority employed different mechanisms to legitimize their position. Originally, it is this aristocracy was associated to stockbreeding, with trasterminance as the core of organization system and the main economic activity. At the same time, shepherding contributed to the definition of paths and communications to and from Dodona with the rest of settlements in Epirus.

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120 Moustakis, 2006, 129.



## 8 Conclusions – Paths and communications to Dodona

These conclusions have a triple aim. First, to highlight the main theories linked to the function and internal organization of Dodona. The second goal is to present a comparative approach to Dodona within its wider regional context of Epirus, and to examine its role in the articulation of the territory and in the creation of an identity discourse. Finally, a global perspective covering the entire Greek world will be discussed. Put short, the purpose of this study is to reconstruct an image of Dodona on different levels: to attend to the framework of paths and communications where the sanctuary acted not only as recipient, but also as emitting focus; and to observe the way its physical and symbolic landscape evolved, taking into account that the elites were interested in different historical moments in the elaboration of a regional identity, originally panmolossian but later panepirote.

### 8.1 Dodona, gazing inside the sanctuary

One of the main premises of this study is that dynamism prevailed in Dodona, and in all the sanctuaries. Religion is usually seen as static, as something where changes take place just in specific moments and where stability is the rule. But the reality is completely different. Material, literary, epigraphic, and numismatic evidence demonstrate this. Modifications experienced by a cult center can be due to plethora of factors, such as the development of the region where it is located, the appropriation of the place by a new community or state, the alteration of networks of those sites that were on the way to that sanctuary or, more widely, the historical evolution of the whole culture.

If we compile the data of Dodona and the obtained results, we can discern three transcendental milestones in the history of this place. The Molossian control of the sanctuary was the first one, which happened around the end of the 5th century or at least not later than the beginning of the 4th; the region turned later from a kingdom into a *koinon*, then the so-called Alliance and, finally, the Epirote *Koinon*. The second was the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic Period that entailed a deep transformation of the Greek world. Amongst other things, the system of the *polis* lost autonomy and power, a process linked to the rise of Hellenistic kingdoms not only in Greece, but in the entire empire of Alexander the Great. Unavoidably, there were significant effects on religion and therefore in Dodona, an aspect that nobody has analyzed deeply. Thirdly, the coming of Rome, who conquered Epirus in 167 BCE was a turning point on the history of Dodona, both because of the internal consequences (lower activity, oracular consultations were no longer written...) and

the general situation of Epirus. Although the number of 150,000 enslaved Epirotes<sup>1</sup> is surely exaggerated, there is no doubt that part of the population was forced to abandon their homes, which entailed a significant depopulation of the area. It can also be added that in 31st BCE Nicopolis was founded. In order to do it, people from many Epirote cities were moved to the new center. This redistribution of population obviously affected to the development of all these sites and their relations among them.

By the 8th century, there is no doubt that Dodona was already a cult space.<sup>2</sup> It makes sense to restore an image of a temporal or seasonal sanctuary in its origins, linked to shepherding, which was together with agriculture the main economic activity of the region. By using a diachronic perspective, it has been analyzed which gods were worshipped during the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Ages. The introduction of new cults is frequent, as well as the adaptation of those already existing to the new cultural and social trends, which usually implies the strengthening of a new facet of this divinity that was not so important before. The pre-eminence of Dione and over all Zeus Naios is undeniable, the last one with certain connotation of war-like divinity. Some offerings, especially female figurines, could certainly be associated to Aphrodite, although the same reasoning can be applied to Dione; in fact, it is quite strange that scholars have not identified any votive to the latter. Thus, maybe these figurines were destined mainly to Dione, and perhaps at the same time to Aphrodite, who was considered here as her daughter. Perhaps Pyrrhus introduced the specific cult of Aphrodite Aeneadas, brought from Sicilia and established also in Ambrakia. The literary reference of Aeneas visiting Dodona may support this theory.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that this goddess was previously worshipped here and its cult became more significant during the reign of Pyrrhus.

The oracle suggested to offer sacrifices to the river Achelous, at least when Ephorus (400/380 – 330 BCE) wrote his work.<sup>4</sup> This can be related to the symbolism of Dodona and the Achelous as frontiers: the former between Greek and “Barbarian” world,<sup>5</sup> the later between Akarnania and Aetolia. Themis and Apollo appear in some oracular consultations,<sup>6</sup> which may reflect the coming of new oracular trends. However, as these pieces represent a quite small part of the total amount of tablets, being Zeus and Dione the usual gods here, it seems that the Themis and Apollo were consulted just occasionally. On the other hand, it is difficult to assume that this is

1 Polyb., 30, 15, 5; Plut., *Aem.* 29; Livy, 45, 34, 5; Str. 7, 7, 3.

2 For the Bronze Age materials, see Tartaron (2004).

3 Dion.Hal., *Ant. Rom.* 1, 51, 1.

4 Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F20b.

5 See section 8.3.

6 Themis: *Praktika* 1967, 49, No. 5; C23; *SGDI* 1581 (the name of the goddess is completely restored); *DVC* 128A; *DVC* 1006B; *DVC* 2524B; *DVC* 3055A. In all of them Themis is mentioned together with Zeus and Dione, except in the first one, where Apollo appears, too. The dating of these tablets is 4th-3rd centuries BC. Apollo: there are five confirmed examples: *Praktika* 1967, 49, No. 5 (with Zeus, Dione and Themis); *DVC* 224A, 565A, 2726A and 2964B. Maybe four more: *DVC* 1045A, 1299B, 2203B and 3671. All of them dated on 5th and 4th centuries.

just due to the preference of the pilgrim (for example, if the person was from Ambra-kia, where Apollo was the tutelary god); as most of those questions are related to justice, this can be an explanation. In any case, the debate remains open. Apart from that, the iconographic representation of Apollo and Herakles in Dodona cannot be used as an irrefutable evidence of the cult of these gods, nor the existence of a temple of Herakles. I suggest that the appearance of the hero is linked to the political discourse of the Molossian kingdom that was supposed to descend from Herakles, as well as from Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles.

Another important point of this book is the identification of cult buildings in the sacred area of Dodona. Conventionally, it has been supposed that there were six temples (E1, A, Γ, Θ, Z and Λ). Recently some scholars have provided new theories about the real function of some of these structures, mainly Emmerling, but also Piccinini and Mylonopoulos.<sup>7</sup> These authors prove that there are no material evidences to assure that all of them functioned as temples. Although it is possible to see some as archives, I consider more probable that they were treasuries. Only buildings E1 and Z can be considered for sure as cult structures, the former of Zeus Naios, the later of Dione (maybe sharing the space with Aphrodite). The function of the others as treasuries, located in the same space of the temples, can be understood if we take into account the political development of Epirus, where Dodona became the ground identity recognition for the three main Epirote *ethne*.

Building A, where Herakles appears in both a tympanum – as Katsikoudis suggests, instead of a metope<sup>8</sup> – and in a relief in a cuirass, could be the treasure of the Molossian *ethnos*. This decoration would have enforced the link between the Aeacid dynasty and this hero. It can also be supposed that, although it has not been conserved, there were elements associated to the other heroic genealogy, that of Neoptolemus, son of Achilles. As from 232 onwards almost the entire Epirus was controlled by the Epirote *Koinon*, it would be quite surprising that this federal state did not build a treasure. Building Θ, dated in the reconstruction of the sanctuary after the Aetolian attack of 219, can be that one.<sup>9</sup> There are still two more structures. Building Λ shows some similarities among two treasuries found in Phoenice and Butrint, so it could have been erected by the Chaonian *ethnos*. This means that Γ, supposedly destroyed by the Aetolians, could have been the Thesprotian treasure, although there are no proofs to support this interpretation. One of the main problems in this theme is that dating of all these structures is problematic, as Emmerling explains in her work.

The function of building O-O1-O2 has been questioned, too. It is not sure that it was a *prytaneion*, because the only evidence to support this theory appears in an oracular consultation,<sup>10</sup> but here it is not said that the *prytaneion* was in Dodona

<sup>7</sup> Emmerling, 2012; Piccinini, 2016; Mylonopoulos, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Katsikoudis, 1997, 260.

<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that Emmerling doubts if this dating is correct (2012, 189).

<sup>10</sup> C20.

or in other center. If we take into account its internal organization, the distribution of the rooms, to consider building O as a space for *symposia* is reasonable. But this does not imply that it was not a *prytaneion*, owing to the fact that this kind of building was usually a space for banquets.

The way sacred landscape is perceived is not a very common approach. Researchers tend to focus on cults, material evidence and the influence of historical development. Nevertheless, cognitive processes that are present in the visit of this kind of places are not frequently considered. The main reason is that it is said to be impossible to reconstruct the mental process of a person from an extinct culture. In other words, we cannot know how a pilgrim experienced his/her trip to Dodona. However, this view is partly erroneous. Despite of being true that such a kind of reconstruction is too subjective because the current researcher sees the surrounding world in a completely different way than an ancient Greek person did, there are certain aspects that allow us to dig into this question in a non-ambiguous way. These criterion, employed more and more in archaeological studies, especially in landscape archaeology, are visibility and movement.

By attending to the configuration of the different elements that define landscape, their visibility is the key point to discern which ones were more significant.<sup>11</sup> Specific aspects of the culture must also be considered. For example, in this study it has been suggested that the theater, whose enormous dimensions do not fit in a small sanctuary as Dodona was, could have been built in this way to highlight the Greekness of the place, and thus of Molossian *ethnos* and the entire Epirus. Theaters are one of the main characteristic elements of the Greek world. As it was the first building that pilgrims saw when they walked towards Dodona, this would have shown the Greek character of a population that were sometimes considered almost barbarian. The orientation of the theater has also been decisive to identify which were the main routes to the sanctuary: although it was possible to reach it from the north, the south and the southeast (by crossing the mountains from current village of Ampelia), it seems that southern and southeastern were more frequent. This hypothesis is sustained, on the one hand, because of the orientation of the theater to the south;<sup>12</sup> and on the other hand, because the southern entrance to the sacred area was certainly the main one. By entering through this access, both of the stoas were located on the sides, an open space in the center and, in front of the pilgrims, the temples and treasuries.

Movement of people is the second factor. The reader of this book can easily observe the entire complex of Dodona. By just taking a glance it is possible to see all the group of buildings. However, the perception of a place depends on how the person

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<sup>11</sup> GIS approaches usually linked to this perspective are not used in this book.

<sup>12</sup> It can be said that the structure lies over the hill. However, if most of pilgrims had come from the North, it would have been built on the western part of that hill, that was also very near. But in the current way those who came from the North saw the theater when they were already at the sanctuary, so the impression could have been less remarkable.

moves forward. If the pilgrim reached Dodona from the south or southeast, the theater was the first building to be seen. Once the person crossed the southern entrance, the path followed near to the honorific statues that were located in front of both stoas, as well as some other objects (steles, etc.). Those sculptures commemorated the great deeds of some people, and at the same time they highlighted the presence and importance of those who have dedicated them (the Epirote *Koinon*, the *Koinon* of the Bylliones), in a way that was supposed to endure for a long time, almost eternal. It is not a matter of casualty that these elements were located here, but it was considered how people moved into and through the sacred area, how they interact with the settings.

The effort is another aspect that is frequently examined in GIS studies, usually when the routes are calculated, to try to find the easiest and most comfortable itinerary. Although this approach has been scarcely employed in this study, it is worth pointing out the effort to make a pilgrimage to Dodona, something that could be similar to the one to Delphi. Both sanctuaries are located in mountainous areas, and therefore reaching these places implies that a great distance (longer in the Epirote case) must be covered by walking through paths that required physical fatigue. This factor doubtless influenced pilgrimage to Dodona, as well as the kind of activity that each person wanted to do in the sanctuary. The place was not perceived in the same way by those who went to consult the oracle, than those who participated in or assisted the Naia, or those slaves that knew that they were going to be freed there. Depending on the purpose, each person paid attention to certain elements, as for example the theater and the stadium for the athletes, or the oak and the temple of Zeus for the oracle consultant.

It cannot be doubted that the perception of Dodona was radically different when it was an open-air sanctuary, without buildings.<sup>13</sup> This later construction process can be explained through a cognitive approach: the absence of urban elements was an added symbolic value in the sacred landscape of this site, where a monumental character was rejected in favor of a more intense connection with nature. However, once the Molossian control of the sanctuary was effective, this reasoning was altered, and thus the monumentalization began, although its dimensions, except the theater, were not quite impressive, maybe because they tried that that “natural character” remained.

The peculiar role played by the Dodonaean oak must be analyzed. This tree was the most sacred element of the sanctuary, but unavoidably the building process, especially the temple of Zeus, affected the way it was seen and perceived. If we consider the theory of Dakaris of the oak inside the walls of the *temenos* of building E1 as the correct one, then a *naiskos* was initially constructed near the oak. The tree had

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<sup>13</sup> We have to take into account that this construction process was not a one-time event, but that lasted several centuries. It began in the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 4th century BC, and finished when the Byzantine basilica was erected. What we see now is just the global reconstruction of the sanctuary, and not what pilgrims saw during the Hellenistic period.

been before surrounded just by cauldrons over tripods. In a second phase, that small temple became bigger and a short height wall was added. This was replaced in a later third phase by a wider, taller and more monumental one. If we observe how the walls are disposed and the supposed location of the oak (near the eastern wall, where there were no columns), the entrance of the former wall was in front of the oak. However, the new one had the access in the center, perfectly aligned with the temple, and thus reduced the visual impact of the oak. Despite of this, the tree could still have been seen from outside because the walls were not so high. On the other hand, this height was enough to potentiate the sound of the cauldron that was hit by the whip of the statue given by the Kerkyraean population as a present; this object is supposed to have replaced the previous circle of cauldrons over tripods.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the sound of this metallic clash, even if it was just one object, was amplified inside the space of the *temenos* thanks to the walls.

This section finishes with one of the main conclusions of this study: the contrast between the apparent descent of oracular activity in Dodona<sup>15</sup> and the development of polyfunctionality, both of them processes clearly verified in the 3rd century.<sup>16</sup> It is intriguing to put this in relation with a prestige loss of the oracle, due to the fierce control of the Molossian kingdom first and the *Koinon* later. The quarrel between Olympias and Athens because of the *theoria* that the Attic *polis* was supposed to send to Dodona,<sup>17</sup> is a good argument to sustain this theory. Nevertheless, Dodona was always famous because of her oracle and this point of view remained in the same way during the Roman period. Because of this, a wider perspective has been applied and other oracles have been briefly analyzed: Delphi, Dydimi, Claros and Trophonios. The result verified that there was a general trend to consult less the oracles during the Hellenistic Age, due to several factors, as the opening to new neighbor cultures and consequently to the coming of new ways of religious expression and practices, or the modification of the system of the *polis*. Thus the change experienced by Dodona does not respond to the political development of Epirus (although this could have influenced), but mainly to the deep transformation of the Greek world during its transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic period.

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<sup>14</sup> This reasoning explains also why there are fewer tripods during from the 4th century onwards.

<sup>15</sup> It is confirmed the apparent lower number of oracular tablets, the almost total absence of literary references of consultations during the Hellenistic period – being King Pyrrhus the exception – and the reduction of the amount of votives – which however cannot be associated just to the oracular pilgrimage. Each aspect could be analyzed separately and there could be different explanations. But if we consider them together, there is likely a more complex and global reason.

<sup>16</sup> This polyfunctionality, as stated above, is not a phenomenon that took place only in Dodona, but in the majority of sanctuaries. One of the goals of this study is to provide a framework for future works that attempt to reconstruct the history and development of a cult site in this way.

<sup>17</sup> Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24–26.

## 8.2 Entangled centers – Dodona, Molossia, and Epirus

It would be a mistake to think that a sanctuary, Dodona in this case, can be understood just as an isolated site, separated from its surroundings. Even taking into account its historical context, the resulting image is not complete. It is essential to dig into the interaction among this center and the rest of the sites of its regions, owing to the fact that the existing connections of these settlements help to understand the way they developed and certain peculiarities that, if not approached in this way, cannot be explained. From the start, it is supposed that the nearer they are, the more capacity of interrelation they have, so the intensity of the action diminishes as it is further.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, here two different areas are distinguished, the entire Epirus and, more specifically, Molossia.<sup>19</sup>

In order to carry out this aim, it is worth pointing out the role of routes as the unifying axis of the space that articulated the organization of the territory and the communications among the different communities that inhabited it. The plain of Ioannina is doubtless a good example of an itinerary intersection that crossed the hinterland of Epirus and connected the western coast of Hellas with Thessaly. Four basic routes that converged in this plateau have been identified. From the north, by crossing the Akrokeraunian Mountains, a path came from the area of Apollonia; from the west the Glykis Limen was the main harbor, although Gitana there might be another important route to the hinterland of Epirus; from the south, the starting point were Ambrakia and Ambrakos (Kastro Rogoi, as the hypothesis of Karatzeni seems to be the correct one);<sup>20</sup> finally, from Thessaly one main way to cross the Pindus range is the pass where Metsovo is located. The reconstruction of these routes<sup>21</sup> is possible thanks to the combination of the scarce ancient sources and some modern references (as the Balkan Wars of 1913–1914) with the analysis of the distribution of settlements. Dodona, as it was very near to the plateau of Ioannina, benefited from her privileged situation.

A key point to understand this is the orography of Epirus, whose valleys traced most of the itineraries. Shepherds were likely for centuries the most active sector of the population to define and use these paths. Shepherding surely was decisive to create and conserve routes, and probably played a significant role in the origin of Dodona. We have seen that cattle activity can be found in votive offerings and oracular consultations, as well as literature shows the great fame of Epirote stock. Even with

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<sup>18</sup> Grau Mira, 2010, 104–105.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, it is possible to apply more scales, as for example the immediate surroundings of the sanctuary. However, as the information of Epirus is quite scarce because only a few sites have excavated and the rest of sources do not offer much more data, it was decided to focus just on these two spheres as the main ones.

<sup>20</sup> Karatzeni, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> The main expert in this topic was Hammond and, in the specific case of Molossia, Dausse has written some valuable works.



all that, it is advisable not to use the term transhumance when we speak about Greece. The concept of transterminance is a more appropriate one. Whereas transhumance requires a wider and more stable system of control and implies to cover very long distances, transterminance is a kind of smaller-scale shepherding, with a less complex framework and a shorter movement of cattle. It has sense to look in this way Epirus, with stock moving around near valleys, without the necessity to go over the whole region. In fact, the fragmentation of the territory in multiple *ethne*, with the resulting problem of crossing frontiers, would make difficult an extensive movement,<sup>22</sup> while this activity would have been easier and more frequent among neighbor communities.

This territorial division of Epirus in different grades, with even three ethnic levels,<sup>23</sup> conditioned the political evolution of Epirus. After a long phase during the Archaic and part of the Classical Ages when it seems that they developed separately, there is a trend towards the unification of some areas. The most remarkable one is Molossia, with a kingdom ruled by the Aeacid dynasty as the epicenter. This expansive phenomenon was not continuous, but it can be discerned some periods of setback; however, the process had not turning back. This fact surely responded to the acknowledgment by the new entities that appear that cooperation allowed them to be safer and more powerful.<sup>24</sup> It looks striking how works focused on the political development of Epirus have recently proliferated. The most forceful publication that offers a new vision of this topic has been written by Meyer, who has revised the epigraphic material and reinterpreted the history of this region. Nevertheless, although she emphasizes the ambiguity and vagueness of certain data, her own reasoning suffers from the same problem. Even more recently, Pascual has suggested the existence of an Epirote kingdom, divided into the three main *ethne* organized in three *koina*, already in the time of Alketas I, that is to say, in the first half of the 4th century. But the analysis of his theory is again not too convincing, although it is true that sounds more reasonable. Therefore this book defends the conventional theory.

Dodona played a significant role in the development of Epirote federalism, as it was used in the discourse that tried to bind the different communities together in order to create and to consolidate a common identity. Usually works focused on Greek *koina* analyze the utilization of ethnic identity based on kinship and sharing the same territory. However, sometimes there were no mythical genealogies that covered an entire area.<sup>25</sup> While Aetolians have Aetolos as their eponym hero and Akarnanians had Akarnan, there was not such a figure in Epirus, but just in the different *ethne*, as for instance Molossos for Molossia. This is due to the initial view of Epirus as geographical concept, because the attempt to include it in the identity discourse

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<sup>22</sup> This would have been possible just during the period of the *Koinon*.

<sup>23</sup> As for instance, Molossian (ethnic), Onopernos (philetic) and Cartatos (clan) (Lhôte, 2011, 105).

<sup>24</sup> Mackil, 2013, 460–462.

<sup>25</sup> Mackil, 2014, 281.

seems to have begun not before the 4th century. That is why there are no references about “Epirotes” as an *ethnos* in the previous ancient works. This implies to clarify that what we have in Epirus was not an ethnic identity based on a common territory and kinship, because the latter is absent. It was necessary to employ some other mechanisms.

Dodona came on the scene in this context. Its sacred landscape was a common space for Epirotes, in both physical and symbolic spheres, becoming the religious capital of the *Koinon*. This theory is based mainly on the documentation regarding to the federal state that was found in Dodona and the statues dedicated by the *Koinon*. It was a common sacred space for all the members of the federal state. The configuration of Dodona as the Epirote cult center par excellence was materially expressed for example in numismatics. There are several issues dated on the Alliance period and the *Koinon*, where we can see the oak with the doves, crowns made with oak leaves, the tripod and both Zeus Naios and Dione together. Therefore, Dodona ran through the frontiers of her valley and the Molossian region, so her influence expanded all over Epirus.

Additionally, Dodona was a space for elite negotiation, covering a territory that became larger as the development went on, first with the Molossian *Koinon*, then the Alliance and finally the Epirote *Koinon*. A place where these elites defined their spatial area of influence and took decisions that affected to the relationships among the different *ethne*. A proof of this phenomenon is the evidence of offerings that can be associated to *symposia*, as for example dining vases (kraters mainly), and also, if my hypothesis is correct, the erection of treasuries by the main *ethne* and the *Koinon*.

The Epirote territory was organized in a peculiar way. In the 4th-3rd centuries most of the fortified sites were clearly consolidated, most of them located in high places or, as it is said in the ancient term, in ἀκροπόλεις. In the surroundings of all of them there were *komai* and some other smaller settlements, such as simple farms. Although it is commonly thought that these minor places were just the *chora* that was controlled by each *asty* (the acropolis in these cases), there are some recent studies that prove that their outreach was wider.<sup>26</sup> Our knowledge of the previous centuries is quite lower, but it can be presumed that rural environment was the general trend, being the main exception coastal colonies. Nevertheless, as a result of researching the different cult centers of Molossia a new and interesting image has been obtained. It can help to understand better how this territory was organized and why the 4th century was a period of enormous changes.

At least four sanctuaries are confirmed in Molossia: Dodona (Zeus Naios and Dione, mainly), Dourouti (Demeter and Kore),<sup>27</sup> Rodotopi (Artemis?/Zeus Areios?) and Vaxia (Artemis/Hekate). Giourganista is likely to be the fifth one. The first

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<sup>26</sup> Papadopoulos, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> The hypothesis of Andréou (2004, 577) of the cult of the Cabirian here was rejected in section 5.3.1 because there are no solid arguments to support it.

one, as we know, had a wider impact, not just local. Dourouti is dated from 9th to 4th century, Vaxia from the 5th (with evidence of cult activity) to the 2nd and Rodotopi from the 4th to the Roman Empire. These last two sites, together with Giourganista, show a significative development in the Hellenistic age. This means that the abandonment of Dourouti happened at the same epoch as the new ones became more important. It can be assumed that there were more sanctuaries in the Molossian territory, but these only cases that we know present an intriguing fact. By observing the archaeological maps (mainly MAP 6), it can be noticed that cult centers are located in specific areas, far one from another. Each sanctuary had some settlements in its nearest range. I suggest that these sacred spaces were milestones in the Molossian geography that articulated the borders of the territory of the sub-*ethne*. They were visited by that local population and therefore they contributed to the political configuration of the region.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, a cult of Hekate in Vaxia is significant because this goddess was usually associated to paths and crossroads. In fact, this sanctuary was near to the intersection of the three main routes that crossed the Ioannina plain – from Ambrakia, from Apollonia and from Thessaly.

At any rate, it is not just chance that this phenomenon coincides with the urbanization process of Epirus, when the great fortified settled areas were established and consolidated on high locations. This movement of the population entailed the reorganization of the religious space, emerging these new sanctuaries that replaced the previous ones. Surely Dourouti, partly cult center and partly necropolis, was abandoned in this transformation process. It is worth pointing out that this phenomenon did not take place instantaneously, but that it was a process covered some time and that began probably in the 5th century, when the first cult evidences of Vaxia appear.

Rodotopi, the biggest temple found in Molossia, was surely one of the main religious sites and it was likely an extra-urban sanctuary of from Megalo Gardiki. This study supports the hypothesis of Pliakou concerning the cult of the site. The Greek archaeologist interprets it as a shrine of Artemis Hegemona, as the material evidence shows indeed.<sup>29</sup> Another possibility, less likely, is that the temple was shared also for the cult of Zeus Arios, a warlike divinity, too. This aspect brings us to another question linked to religious sites of Molossia: the presence of cults of goddesses.

Votives and other related materials found in Dourouti, Rodotopi, Vaxia and Giourganista show that female cults were usual. The most common evidence is the small terracotta statuettes of women (or just the heads). In this way, Dourouti is associated to Demeter and Kore, Rodotopi maybe to Artemis Hegemona (alone or together with Zeus Areios) and Vaxia to Artemis of Hekate. There are not enough data to know which goddess was worshipped in Giourganista. Perhaps fertility connotation was relevant, which can be linked to the use of land (farming, pastures) and, therefore, to frontiers. Also Dodona has to be mentioned here, owing to the

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<sup>28</sup> Dourouti also was a necropolis, which highlights its boundary character.

<sup>29</sup> Pliakou, 2011b, 92–96.

fact that although Zeus Naios was the main cult, the importance of Dione is unavoidable.

The situation of women in Epirus should receive a brief commentary, because it seems to have been less restrictive than other parts of Greece, especially the better documented Athens. But it is worth pointing out that this aspect is not necessarily related to the importance of the female cults in Molossia. This peculiarity is surely due to the association of those cults to territorial borders, the frontiers that were defined throughout the use of lands for farming and shepherding. If we take into consideration the fragmentation of the region in *ethne*, this explanation is admissible.

Our knowledge of Epirote society is limited, but there are some intriguing data from Dodona. Many oracular consultations were made by women, although this does not mean that they were important in society;<sup>30</sup> this activity was normal in the entire Greece. However, they seem to have been relevant in manumission and citizenship concessions. The number of examples is much lower than the male ones, but if we compare this with an overview of other Greek areas, it is proportionally bigger.

The ruling period of Olympias, maybe as a co-regent with Cleopatra, deserves to be described here because of its repercussion in Dodona. She became the leader of the Molossian kingdom when Alexander I died ca. 331 BCE. This happened in the 4th century, when that territory was already transforming. It has been proposed in this book that Olympias played a crucial role on the cult of Dione, which was enhanced by her. A good argument is the quarrel between this ruler and Athens, about the *theoria* that Athenians tried to send to Dodona; they could not do it because Olympias reclaimed this sanctuary as hers. It is also possible that building Z, considered here as the temple of Dione (perhaps together with Aphrodite) was built now. With all data collected, I suggest that this regent employed these mechanisms to legitimate her position that was probably unstable in the beginning. Taking advance of the importance of the worship of goddesses in Molossia, a way to highlight this in Dodona was to erect a specific cult structure for Dione, which at the same time allowed her to consolidate her own power. This power was precisely shown when she forbade Athenians to perform their rites, even when, as Hyperides says, the oracle of Dodona had ordered it.<sup>31</sup> By means of claiming Dodona as her property, Olympias could have shown an image where weakness was replaced by strength, as well as she reflected the conviction that the sanctuary, located in her territory, was truly hers, and therefore she could decide how it was managed and who was allowed to make rites there.

One of the aims of this study is to trail more deeply the traces of paths and communications to Dodona in those centers that were located in those routes. That is to say, to find hosting structures, cult coincidences and some other related aspects. The

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<sup>30</sup> Together with consultations was the dedication of votives (although not all of them). It is thought that at least one of each offering in Greece was made by women (Goff, 2004, 44).

<sup>31</sup> Hyp., *Eux.* 4, 24–26.

results have not been satisfactory, partly because of the scarce knowledge that we have of those sites.

Nevertheless, some specific cases should be mentioned, as for example Dourouti. Here, 25 strigils and five flute-mouths were found in the burials and cover chronologically the Archaic and Classical periods. They may be associated to agonistic competitions, and this brings us to the games of Dodona, likely celebrated with a local character already in the 5th century,<sup>32</sup> and that later in the 3rd turned into the pan-hellenic Naia, which we can document thanks to epigraphic and archaeological sources. As some of these objects cannot be connected to Dodonaean games because they date older, they do reflect at least the employment of sports (athletic and artistic). So it can be suggested that there were competitions where elites participated, and this practice at some point became officially celebrated in Dodona.

Also Ambrakia may show the influence of the Epirote sanctuary, as we can see in the minting of local coins in the 5th century, with the slogan AMIPAKIOTAN and the representation of Zeus Keraunios. Although this epithet was widespread in the Greek world, there could be a connection with Dodona, where at least eight statues of this god throwing the bolt are attested, and whose chronology is 6th and 5th centuries. Another interesting aspect is the cult connection between Ambrakia and Ammotos/Horraum, because archaeological evidence let us to think that also in this later site Apollo Agyeios (usually the omphalos) was worshipped. However, this link is not necessarily due to the movement of pilgrims from Ambrakia to Dodona, but to all the people that went over that itinerary because for different purposes (commerce, shepherding, troops movement).

### 8.3 Entangled regions – Dodona, Greece, and the colonies

The transcendence of Dodona spread far away from the Epirote frontiers, reaching almost the entire Greek world, not only the mainland but also the colonies. The oracle was not the only reason; many other activities that took place here contributed to this opening to neighbor areas. Moreover, the sanctuary experienced how foreign policy of the Molossian kingdom and the Epirote *Koinon* entailed some repercussions on its sacred space.

Sources provide us useful information of the origin of pilgrims and of the movement to other places, as for example when a consultant wanted to establish a new commerce in Apollonia or to go to the new colony of Pharos. Thank to the oracular epigraphy we know that questions usually attended to daily-life matters that covered all sectors of society, including slaves. Nevertheless, material evidence does not correspond with this reasoning, because most of the votive offerings are in bronze, many of them linked to *symposia*. Only a few offerings are connected with lower social

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<sup>32</sup> As certain votives attest, for example tripods dedicated by rhapsodes.

groups; in fact, the almost total absence of pottery is enormously striking. It can be presumed however that poor people made offerings usually with perishable material. But it is also essential to take into account the time that was required to consult the oracle: three days walking from Ambrakos or Ambrakia, the main route; then the consultation process (because it was not just immediate) and after it the coming. If we add the days or weeks needed to reach the harbors of Epirus from the homeland of the pilgrim, that according to the dialect variation of epigraphy covers a wide range of places, the conclusion is that sometimes it was necessary to spend some weeks to ask the oracle. This implies that it was humble people from outside of Epirus whom were hard-pressed to do such a kind of pilgrimage. They could not afford to take so much time and resources, while those who lived in Epirus or in the nearby (Thessaly, Akarnania, Illyria) could do it. Thus, if we consider all this, the resulting image is not so surprising. Although questions to the oracle cover the entire social spectrum, it is more likely to assume that most of them were made by well-off people that could spend that time in this activity and that had enough resources to acquire the objects that later were going to deposit. On the other hand, those who were more humble and lived in Epirus, went to consult to Zeus Naios and Dodona and probably offered votives made with perishable materials. This can also explain why so many people were capable of writing their consultations.

Sources show contacts and special connections with specific areas and *poleis*. The most prolific one was probably with Athens, which seems to have begun to move closer to Molossia in the final decades of 5th century. This fact can be explained if we attend to the historical context, the Peloponnese War. In this conflict Delphi was positioned in favor of Sparta, so Athens turned to Dodona and Molossia. The consultation regarding to the new cult of Thracian god Bendis in 413–412<sup>33</sup> fits in this reasoning. At the same time, these contacts were translated into the instauration of the cult of Zeus Naios and Dione in the Acropolis.

Boiotia is the other region closely interconnected with Dodona. In this case, historical ground seems to go back to the period of migrations during the Dark Age. It would not be strange, though, that some archaic links were enhanced to strengthen the bond with Dodona and its prestigious oracle in a time when the Boiotian *Koinon* aimed to consolidate the unity of all their members. The most remarkable tie was the *tripodephoria*, which was supposed to have its origins in the assassination of one of the Dodonaean priestesses by the Boiotians.<sup>34</sup> Although there is no material confirmation of this event, archaeologists found a tripod deposited by a community, that is to say, at least one *tripodephoria* is attested. This piece – concretely two legs – is dated on the 5th century, where we can read the name of the city of the Le-

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<sup>33</sup> Piccinini, 2012, 266–268.

<sup>34</sup> Ephor., *FGrHis* 70 F119 (= Str., 9, 2, 4).

choians and that has not been identified yet.<sup>35</sup> This evidence proves that Dodona was the destination of this kind of rituals.

Another theme that has provided some suggestive conclusions is the relationship with other sanctuaries, especially Olympia and Delphi. The bond with the first one has always been highlighted, usually linked to the foundation of Elean colonies in the Epirote coast; this phenomenon is supposed to have been a determinant influence in the consolidation – or even the origin – of the cult of Zeus. However, the recent study of Domínguez, with strong arguments, rejects this view.<sup>36</sup> This is not an impediment to confirm that between both sanctuaries there were certain connections throughout centuries, as coincidences in offerings show.

At the same time, Delphi is commonly seen as a competitor; the oracle of Apollo against the oracle of Zeus, confronted to reach a greater fame and prestige. In a certain way this is deduced from the historical context, as for instance when Athens partially turned to Dodona because Delphi was philospartan. But actually this situation was perhaps different. In the light of the data concerning consultations, the Pythian oracle seems to have been visited for very remarkable questions, as the foundation of colonies, whereas Dodona was a preferred destiny for people and communities with a distinct kind of inquietudes, seemingly more routine worries. This does not imply that consultations were never similar in both places, because we know for sure that this did happen. At the same time that literature shows several relevant political questions, there were also daily-life consultations in Delphi. But it seems that in practice these sanctuaries were specialized in different divinatory spheres, and although the Pythian oracle was doubtless the most famous one of the Greek world, this did not necessarily entail a smaller amount of pilgrims to Dodona. Eidinow has proposed to see this interaction not as competition, but as cooperation, in the “market in futures”.<sup>37</sup> However, since there actually no strong evidence of movements or acts of sanctuaries that we could see as cooperation, it makes more sense to understand it as desistance, a non-disruption dynamic, as Piccinini suggests.<sup>38</sup>

Both sanctuaries show symptoms of a lower oracular activity in the 3rd century, not just because Delphi was fiercely controlled by the Aetolian *Koinon* and Dodona under the zone of influence of Molossia and the Epirote *Koinon*, but because of the apparent minor importance of oracles in a period in which the coming of new ways of religious and mantic expression and practice happened.

Changing to another aspect, it is necessary to accept that there are some connections that have been scarcely analyzed. The main case is Illyria, the northern neighbor of Epirus. Illyrian materials and references concerning to Dodona are not so plentiful. Some offerings are attested, especially during the Archaic period; there are also

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<sup>35</sup> MN At. No. 451; Piccinini 2012, 217–218. See section 4.6.

<sup>36</sup> Domínguez, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Eidinow, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Piccinini, 2018, 188.



some Illyrians names in the oracular consultations. However, the general overview is that Dodona was more oriented to Greece than to her northern neighbors.

This pro-Hellenic position, that in fact is “Hellenizing” because it highlights the Molossian and Epirote feeling of being Greek, is another conclusion of this book. The hellenicity of Epirus is a complex aspect, due to the different opinions of the ancient authors. One way to solve this problem was to employ certain mechanisms to increase the Greek character of population. Sources show that they shared the same language, religion, customs and many other characteristics. But as Epirus was in the borders and it took no part in most of the events of the Archaic and Classical periods, it is unavoidable that its ethnic identity was questioned.

Dodona acted as a frontier sanctuary, not inside the Epirote territory, but with regard to Greek and “Barbarian” worlds. An argument that supports this theory is the recommendation of the oracle to make sacrifices to Achelous, a river god closely linked to the concept of boundaries or limits.<sup>39</sup> Dodona was never considered a non-Greek oracle, and this certainty was extremely important for Molossian and Epirote society, because it theoretically established the frontier of Hellenic territory further from Dodona.

Dodona was visited by people from most parts of Hellas and other areas of the Greek world, mainly middle Mediterranean colonies. Bosman highlights the importance of the shrine not only for the Epirote identity, but also as a spiritual homeland for all the Greeks.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, it is confirmed its panhellenic character at least since sources attest this; oracular epigraphy is maybe the main proof, so as the oldest pieces are dated to the 6th century, this period, or perhaps a bit later, in the 5th, Dodona was panhellenic. The development of its polyfunctionality since 4th century onwards shows how the sanctuary, and in general the entire Epirus, were already assimilated into Greek geopolitics. The most remarkable sign is the celebration of Naia, perhaps originally local or regional, but for sure panhellenic in the Hellenistic period. The critical opinion of Scott, however, does not look at this phenomenon in the same way. According to him, panhellenic sanctuaries were actually a competition space among Greek communities, that is to say, not to join, but to separate them. Nevertheless, this posture seems to me excessively strict. Although it is true that panhellenic could mean such a specific reasoning, the presence of all Greek communities implies that all together shared the same condition: to belong to the Greek sphere. Thus, in my opinion Dodona was panhellenic.

In conclusion, throughout this book I have tried to analyze the development of Dodona with a diachronic perspective, attending to how paths and communications to the sanctuary show the interrelation between this site and the rest of Epirote centers, as well as in a wider context, the Greek world. At the same time, these pages have delved into the polyfunctionality of the shrine and the variety of expressions

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<sup>39</sup> Lee, 2006, 318 and 323. The explanation is that this river separated Akarnania and Aetolia.

<sup>40</sup> Bosman, 2018, 72.

of this reality through the different sources employed, archaeology, literature, epigraphy, and numismatics. This study aims to contribute to the field of religion in Antiquity with an approach that attempts to take into account the different sides of the same entity, as well as its evolution throughout the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods.

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